







**SOCIETY SKETCHES IN  
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**







*Lady Maria Waldegrave.*  
*from a drawing by John Downman.*

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SOCIETY SKETCHES  
IN THE  
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BY  
NORMAN PEARSON  
AUTHOR OF "SOME PROBLEMS OF EXISTENCE"

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To  
MY WIFE





## PREFACE

SIX of these essays, namely *The Virtuosi*, *The Macaronis*, *The Lighter Side of a Serious Woman* (under the title of *The Lighter Side of Hannah More*), *An Eccentric Beauty*, *A Male Blue-stocking*, and *Gentlemen of the Road* have appeared in the *Nineteenth Century and After*: and *The Wits* and *The Serious Side of a Worldly Man* (under the title of *Some Neglected Aspects of Horace Walpole*) in the *Fortnightly Review*. My best thanks are due to the respective editors of these periodicals for their kind permission to republish them here, and to Mr. John Murray for his kind permission to republish *The Scourers and the Mohocks*, which appeared in the late *Monthly Review*. They have all been enlarged, some very considerably enlarged from their original form. *A Great Proconsul* and *A Lady Wit* are here printed for the first time.

NORMAN PEARSON.



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## I. THE SCOWRERS AND THE MOHOCKS

THE streets of London are not without their dangers and discomforts, but these are mostly the inevitable results of an advancing civilisation. Some two centuries ago, however, they had a different tale to tell, and the perils which then beset them were those of a civilisation which was hardly abreast of the greatness which England had achieved in other directions. In the midst of our well-lighted, well-paved, and admirably policed London, it is difficult to realise how widely it differs from the London of the early eighteenth century. In 1708 the most westerly street in London was Bolton Street, Piccadilly. Even in 1759, Horace Walpole speaks of the surprise with which he saw twenty new stone houses in Piccadilly in the place of the mean habitations which previously stood there. So slow was the westward movement that as late as 1805 there was a turnpike at Hyde Park Corner. The fields came close to Oxford Street (then Tyburn road) and Holborn on the north; and even to the south of this line open spaces like Lincoln's Inn Fields were lonely and unsafe at night. An excellent description of the London streets is given by Gay in his *Trivia*, published in 1716. Their dirtiness is evidenced by the crowds of shoe-blacks :—

The black youth at chosen stands rejoice,  
And "clean your shoes" resounds from ev'ry voice.

According to Mr. Davey, in his *Pageant of London*, a gentleman of this period would usually have his shoes cleaned three or four times a day. Sweepers, too, abounded :—

Waggish boys the stunted besom ply,  
To rid the slabby pavement ;

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and "the laborious beggar sweeps the road." In addition, moreover, to their native dirt, the streets were made the receptacle for all kinds of external filth, and the whole was churned up by the heavy traffic into an indescribable mire. Contamination also was to be feared, not only from the streets, but from their passengers.

Oft in the mingling press,  
The barber's apron soils the sable dress ;  
Shun the perfumer's touch with cautious eye,  
Nor let the baker's step advance too nigh :  
Ye walkers, too, that youthful colours wear,  
Three sullyng trades avoid with equal care ;  
The little chimney-sweeper skulks along,  
And marks with sooty stain the heedless throng !

\* \* \* \* \*

The Chandler's basket, on his shoulder borne,  
With tallow spots thy coat ; resign the way,  
To shun the surly butcher's greasy tray.

Under these circumstances it is easy to understand the competition for "the wall," so often referred to in the literature of the age, and which kept the passenger traffic in a perpetual state of subacute conflict. Sometimes this conflict became more than subacute, and it was often a matter of rather delicate discretion "when to assert the wall and when resign." Chairmen and bullies were the most frequent violators of vested interests in this respect, and Gay recommends a strong cane as the best argument for each of them. In short, neither the streets nor the traffic which surged through them were under any effective control, and consequently there were large opportunities for various kinds of street raiders.

In Jacobean times the streets were infested by the "Muns," the "Tityre Tu's," and the "Hectors." The Hectors seem to have differed little from ordinary bullies (see *Epsom Wells*, by Shadwell), and of the other two not much is known beyond the names. In the case of the Tityre Tu's, however, the name seems to indicate a society which had a smattering at least of classical know-



ledge. Thomas Shadwell puts a reference to all three into the mouth of Tope, the senile debauchee: "I knew the Hector's [he says] and before them the Muns and the Tityre Tu's; they were brave fellows indeed. In those days a man could not go from the Rose Tavern to the Piazza once, but he must venture his life twice, my dear Sir Willy."

The Rose, which figures in the *Rake's Progress*, was a tavern in Covent Garden, much frequented, but not of particularly good repute. In the latter part of the seventeenth century the "Scowrers" appeared, and of these we can get quite a good idea from Shadwell's play of that name, published in 1691. The play opens on the morning after an active night's work. The leaders of the band are Sir William Rant and Wildfire, who are young bloods, and Tope, who is an old, boastful, and garrulous profligate. Besides these there are some subordinates, who form the rank and file of the scowering army. Sir William's recollections of the previous night are half drowned in wine, so he applies to his valet, Ralph, to refresh them: "Some action in the fore part of the night I remember, but the latter part is all darkness to me: yet it runs in my head we had fray . . . where was it?" Whereupon Ralph tells him, in a tone of reproach, "Why, here in Covent Garden. You would needs have a skirmish with some drunken bullies, awkward, roaring, blustering rascals: and Brigadier Stokes, with a detachment of quarter-staves and rusty halberts, fell in pell-mell and routed both parties."

Sir William inquires anxiously, "What execution was there? Whose scull crack't? Whose lungs pierced? Or who lustily bruised?"

RALPH: One of the Bullies has a good lusty flesh wound, the others are a little hack't: but all of them were carryed captive to the Round House, where they have solac'd with ale and brandy all night long. Two of your footmen with bloody coxcombs were likewise in Limbo: two or three of the watchmen have slight hurts, which they are ready to swear are mortal; but your friends, Mr. Tope and Mr. Wildfire, are escap'd unhurt, save a little dry beating, which indeed we seldom fail of.

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SIR WILLIAM : An evening very handsomely spent ! I am glad the Bullies are maul'd. I would rejoice as much to run an English Bully through, as an Irish Rapparee. The city ought to pay a certain number of Bullies' heads for a tribute to the Government, as the Welsh did wolves ; but see my footmen ransom'd.

The Rapparees were bands of marauders which had sprung up in Ireland about 1690, but the cause of Sir William's special quarrel with them is not very obvious. With regard to the Bullies, this odious class seems to have been largely represented about that time. Gay hits off the Bully in some neat lines in *Trivia* :—

But when the bully, with assuming pace,  
Cocks his broad hat, edged round with tarnish'd lace,  
Yield not the way ; defy his strutting pride,  
And thrust him to the muddy kennel's side ;  
He never turns again, nor dares oppose,  
But mutters coward curses as he goes.

The Bully is a rogue, a braggart, and a swindler, haunting the outskirts of society, or ruffling it in the disreputable security of Alsatia. He carries false dice about with him for the benefit of any unwary victim whom he can persuade to gamble, and is always ready to lure young men to their ruin. Between times he turns his hand to black-mailing, or lives on the vices of some unfaithful wife. He is fully depicted in the character of Nickum, in *The Volunteers*, where he is described as “a sharper” ;—Shadwell, who always prides himself on being up-to-date in his phraseology, being careful to explain that this “is a new name for a rogue and a cheat.” (*The Volunteers* was published after his death, which took place in 1692.) It also seems, from the same authority, that the title “Miss” made its first appearance about the same time. Aping the manhood which they did not possess, the Bullies were as much despised by the lusty Scowrers as they were dreaded by the weak and timorous. Even old Tope exclaims, “I will not wear, like a Bully, my arm in a scarf as a sign of battel past, when perhaps the wound is no bigger than that of a lancet in letting blood.”

The favourite practice of the Scowrers was to invade

some tavern in the evening, drive out the customers, ill-treat the proprietor and his attendants, wreck the premises, and above all "roar." For noise was an essential part of the Scowrers' procedure: the motor-bus would have been music to them. When they invade Sir Humphrey Maggot's house, Sir William explains, "Oh, honest Alderman, nown nuncle, i' faith we are come to roar a little with thee":—and they did. Middleton introduces a school of Roaring into his play *A Fair Quarrel* (Act iv. sc. 1). The whole thing is of course fantastic, but the fact of its being treated so prominently shows that the practice of Roaring prevailed widely. Perhaps, too, we can extract from the burlesque some idea of the original. It seems to have consisted in extravagant abuse couched in grandiose and fantastic language. The instructor professes himself ready to teach Roaring in the "Sclavonian, Parthamenian, Barmeoethian, Tyburnian, Wappinganian, or the Modern Londonian" languages. But we gather that, in all alike, Roaring consists largely of empty bluster, or, as he tersely puts it, is "valiant but harmless."

The Scowrers proper were more or less persons of quality, but they had humble imitators in less fashionable circles. These figure also in Shadwell's play, and his description of them is quaint.

WHACHUM, a City-wit and Scowrer, imitator of Sir William.

BLUSTER } his two companions; Scoundrels.  
DINGBOY }

Sir William and his band are inclined to resent the pretensions of these aspirants. "These Mushroom Scowrers," he exclaims, "had best see they do it handsomely, and bring no disgrace upon us, or we may chance to whip some of 'em thro' the lungs about that business." For your Scowrer was an artist in his way, and took a pride in his profession. "'Tis a hard thing," remarks Wildfire reflectively, "to scower naturally and handsomely." But Whachum is enraptured with Sir William's performances, and pays many tributes to the purity of his style.

"Oh had you seen him scower, as I did, oh so delicately,

so like a gentleman! How he cleared the Rose Tavern! . . . He and two other fine gentlemen came roaring in the handsomeliest, and the most genteely turn'd us all out of the room, and swing'd us, and kick'd us about, I vow to Gad, 'twould have done your heart good to have seen it."

Even his profanity has an air of its own.

"Oh, if you did but hear him swear and curse, you'd be in love with him! He does 'em so like a gentleman, while a company of ye here about the town pop out your oaths like pellets out of alder guns. They come so easily, so sweetly from him, even like music from an organ pipe!"

To some extent, of course, this account is a burlesque, but it is not merely fabulous. For Shadwell's work was, in modern phrase, remarkably "topical," and his plays are all interwoven with the quips, cranks, and oddities current in his day. We may be pretty sure, therefore, that this description of the Scowrers and their imitators has a real foundation in fact. Throughout the play the city Scowrers and their exploits are held up to ridicule. Like the Bullies, they are only valiant when there is no real danger. Whachum, after boasting that he has twisted off over two hundred knockers, proceeds:—

"O' my conscience, this morning I beat twenty higling-women, spread their butter about the kennel, broke all their eggs, let their sucking-pigs loose, flung down all the Peds with pippins about the streets, scower'd like lightning, and kick'd fellows like thunder: ha, ha, ha. . . . I wiped out all the milk scores at the doors, nay, I went about serenading with six fiddlers in a dung-cart. Ha, ha; there was a frolic! Ha, ha; there's a mad fellow for you!"

But the distinction drawn here is not merely between two sets of rowdies. It points in reality to a much deeper line of social cleavage; the line between fashion and commerce, or, as it may be expressed, between the West End and the City. In feudal times the younger sons of great families habitually went into trade without losing caste; and this custom continued down to the Stuart times. But soon after-

wards a change set in, and in the course of the eighteenth century a severance—which at times almost amounted to an antagonism—was established between the aristocracy and the mercantile classes. The little brush between Sir Roger de Coverley and Sir Andrew Freeport, in No. 174 of *The Spectator*—between the country gentleman and the City merchant—gives expression to this feeling, though here Sir Andrew has decidedly the best of the argument. The process was evidently at work in Shadwell's time. All through *The Scowrers* the City is girded at. The pompous Sir Humphrey—"a foolish Jacobite Alderman"—assures Sir William that "Duns may be very honest men." Sir William retorts, "So you citizens are apt to think, but we gentlemen believe no such matter." Lady Maggot complains that she can "never teach a citizen manners." The wild Eugenia declares that "there is not such an odious creature as a city-spark;" and even the gentler Clara exclaims against Whachum as "a filthy city-wit."

The charge of being "a wit" may seem a strange reproach, but the term in those days had undergone a curious perversion of meaning. It had been appropriated as a sort of honorary title by men about town, with the idea, perhaps, of shedding a mild intellectual lustre over their dissipations. In most cases it was singularly ill deserved, but society, then as now, was disposed to take people at their own valuation in such matters. And thus, as lawyers are by courtesy "learned," and M.P.'s "honourable," so the man of fashion of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries became, without much difficulty, a "man of fashion and wit." In this combination the fashion was a reality, the wit was a sham. Naturally enough the former smothered the latter, and a man of wit came to mean little more than a man of the fashionable profligate habits. The literature of the period is full of this curious usage of "wit"; and Mr. Rant's rebuke to his repentant son on the company which he had been keeping shows how little it connoted any intellectual worth:—

You'll say they're men of wit; but have a care  
Of a great Wit, who has no understanding.

Even in their politics the Scowrers proper are represented as worthier than the civic variety of the species. The latter are Tories, while the former are true Whigs and supporters of the Government, a fact which seems to Whachum to be the only blot on their fame.

WHACHUM: They are the bravest blades, and purest wits in Christendom.

DINGBOY: But hark you, Squire, by their discourse, even now, they seem to be Whigs.

BLUSTER: Damn'd Whigs, methinks!

WHACHUM: I am afraid they are a little Whiggish; really, 'tis a thousand pities, they have kept ill company.

Shadwell was made Laureate by William III., in the place of Dryden, who lost the post at the Revolution; and hence this rather clumsy compliment to his political patrons.

Various petty disturbers of the public peace emulated the Scowrers at a respectful distance. Among these the best known were the Nickers, whose nightly amusement was breaking windows with coppers.

His scatter'd pence the flying Nicker flings,  
And with the copper shower the casement rings.

*Trivia.*

It is difficult to imagine a milder piece of silly mischief; and as a financial transaction it was hopelessly unsound. For, as the Nicker took to his heels as soon as he had invested his coppers, he got no return whatever on his outlay.

The Scowrers no doubt were reckless and quarrelsome rioters, who paid little heed to the sanctity of person or property, but they did not generally display the deliberate malignity which characterised their successors, the Mohocks or Hawkubites. Our chief information about the Mohocks comes from a paper in No. 324 of *The Spectator* (March 10, 1712), which was written, or at any rate transcribed, by Steele, and which certainly shows traces of embroidery. From it we learn that they were "a nocturnal fraternity," whose name, the Mohock club, was borrowed "from a

sort of cannibals in India." They had a president called the Emperor of the Mohocks, whose arms were a Turkish crescent, which his Imperial Majesty bore "in a very extraordinary manner engraven upon his forehead." After inflaming themselves with drink, "they make a general sally, and attack all that are so unfortunate as to walk the streets through which they patrol. Some are knocked down, others stabbed, others cut and carbonadoed. To put the watch to a total rout, and mortify some of those inoffensive militia, is reckoned a *coup d'éclat*. The particular talents by which these misanthropes are distinguished from one another, consist in the various kinds of barbarities which they execute upon their prisoners. Some are celebrated for a happy dexterity in tipping the lion upon them, which is performed by squeezing the nose flat to the face, and boring out the eyes with the fingers. Others are called the dancing-masters, and teach their scholars to cut capers by running their swords through their legs—a new invention, whether originally French I cannot tell. A third sort are the tumblers," who practised certain outrages upon women. Besides these there were the Sweaters, whose functions are thus described by Steele in No. 332 of *The Spectator* :—

"It is their custom [he says], as soon as they have inclosed the person upon whom they design the favour of a sweat, to whip out their swords, and holding them parallel to the horizon, they describe a sort of magic circle round about him with the points. As soon as this piece of conjuration is performed, and the patient without doubt already beginning to wax warm, to forward the operation, that member of the circle, towards whom he is so rude as to turn his back first, runs his sword directly into that part of the patient wherein schoolboys are punished; and as it is very natural to imagine this will soon make him tack about to some other point, every gentleman does himself the same justice as often as he receives the affront. After this jig is gone two or three times round, and the patient is thought to have sweat sufficiently, he is very handsomely rubbed down by some attendants who carry with them

instruments for that purpose, and so discharged." In the same number he also gives what purports to be a personal experience of his own with the Mohocks, to which the curious may refer for themselves.

Another Mohock pastime was to enclose women in casks and roll them down the street. Steele declares that the Mohocks had been "but of late established," and that *The Spectator* hoped, by calling attention to them, to procure their speedy suppression. Here, however, he is not quite correct in his dates, for the Mohocks appeared first in 1709, though not in such force as in 1712. Lady Stafford observes in a letter of March 11, 1712:—

"Here is nothing talked about but men that goes in partys about the street and cuts peaple with swords or knives, and they call themselves by som hard name that I can nethere speak nor spell; but a Satturday night coming from the opera they assaulted Mr. Davenant and drew their swords upon him, but he took won of them and sent to the round house, but 'tis thought 'twas somebody that would have been known and they gave mony and made their eskape, but what was the great jest about town was they said they had cut off his head of hare."

As will be seen later, the Davenant story was a good deal exaggerated; but in a subsequent letter of March 14, 1712, Lady Stafford writes: "The town says Lord Hinchinbrock is among those that goes about doing mischief."\* Their mode of procedure is thus described in *The Town Rakes, or the Frolicks of the Mohocks or Hawkubites*:—

"Their way is to meet People in the Streets and Stop them, and begin to Banter them, and if they make any Answer, they lay on them with Sticks and toss them from one to another in a very rude manner. . . . They have short Clubs or Batts that have Lead at the End, which will overset a Coach, or turn over a Chair, and Tucks [swords] in their Canes ready for mischief."

Gay's play, *The Mohocks* (published April 15, 1712), carries us no further, for it is manifestly based on *The Spectator*. It is a farcical production, dramatic in form

\* *Wentworth Papers*.







only, which never was, and perhaps was never intended to be acted. Modern writers have been inclined to treat the Mohocks as fabulous beings, and in a later number of *The Spectator* (No. 347, April 8, 1712) Budgell, who contributes a mock manifesto from their Emperor, half suggests that they had hardly more reality than the hobgoblins which haunt the imagination of the rustic. It is true that the evidence does not seem to cover much ground, and it is also likely enough that rumour magnified their atrocities. Similarly, during the garotter scare in the "sixties," the wildest stories of the garotter's cunning and ferocity were afloat. But of the existence of the Mohocks there can be no reasonable doubt whatever. Gay, who was inclined to make fun of them, and wrote a skit which he called "An Argument proving from History, Reason and Scripture that the present race of Mohocks and Hawkabites are the Gog and Magog mentioned in the Revelation," expressly asserts their existence in *Trivia* :—

Who has not heard the Scowrer's midnight fame?  
 Who has not trembled at the Mohock's name?  
 Was there a Watchman took his hourly rounds,  
 Safe from their blows, or new-invented wounds!  
 I pass their desp'rate deeds, and mischiefs done,  
 Where from Snow Hill black steepy torrents run;  
 How matrons, hoop'd within the hogshead womb,  
 Were tumbled furious thence, the rolling tomb  
 O'er the stones thunders, bounds from side to side:  
 So Regulus to save his country died.

Again in a letter of March 14, 1712, Lady Wentworth writes to her son Lord Stafford :—

"I am very much frightened with the fyer, but much more with a gang of Devils that call themself's Mohocks. They put an old woman into a Hogshead, and rooled her down a hill. They cut off som's nosis, others hands and several barbarass tricks, without any provocation. They are said to be young gentlemen. They never take any money from any. Instead of setting fifty pd. upon the head of a Highwayman, sure they would doe much better to sett a hundred upon their heads." \*

\* *Wentworth Papers.*

The same idea seems to have occurred to the authorities; for, so serious had the Mohock outrages become, that on March 17, 1712, a Royal Proclamation was issued offering a reward of £100 for the apprehension of any Mohock. Swift was in mortal terror of them. He writes to Stella on March 9, 1712:—

“Did I tell you of a race of rakes, called the Mohocks, that play the devil about this town every night, slit peoples noses, &c. . . . Young Davenant was telling us at Court how he was set upon by the Mohocks, and how they ran his chair through with a sword. It is not safe being in the streets at night for them. The Bishop of Salisbury’s son [Thomas Burnet] is said to be of the gang” (*Works*, iii. 4).

And here politics come in once more. Shadwell represented the baser sort of Scowrers as Tories. But times are changed: the Tories are now in power, and the reproach of being Whigs is made by Swift to be the crowning misdeed of the Mohocks.

“They are all Whigs [he writes], and a great lady sent to me, to speak to her father and to Lord Treasurer [Harley] to have a care of them, and to be careful also of myself; for she heard they had malicious intentions against the Ministers and their friends. I know not whether there be anything in this, though others are of the same opinion” (*ib.* 5).

Davenant’s assailant turned out to have been only an ordinary drunkard, and Swift begins to hope that there may be little or no truth in the current reports. But his new confidence is short-lived, for he is told in some coffee-house that the gang has special designs upon him; and accordingly, after dinner with the Lord Treasurer, he comes “home in a chair for fear of the Mohocks” (*ib.* 7). A few days later he receives another fright, and abandons his chair because Harley tells him that “the Mohocks insult chairs more than they do those on foot” (*ib.* 10). Lord Winchilsea also tells him “that two of the Mohocks caught a maid of old Lady Winchilsea’s at the door of their house in the Park with a candle, and had just lighted out somebody. They cut all her face, and beat her without any provoca-

tion" (*ib.*). Then once more he seeks the security of a chair. "Our Mohocks go on still and cut people's faces every night, but they shan't cut mine. I like it better as it is. The dogs will cost me at least a crown a week in chairs. I believe the souls of your houghers of cattle have got into them" (*ib.* 21). One cannot help contrasting this rather craven anxiety with the sturdiness of Johnson a generation later, who kept four men who had attacked him in the street at bay till the watch came up, and who, when threatened with a thrashing by Macpherson (the inventor of "Ossian"), replied, "Your rage I defy," and simply provided himself with a thick stick. Swift tells Stella all about the Royal Proclamation, adding that some Mohocks had been taken, one of whom was a baronet. This story seems to be corroborated by one of the papers of the day, which records that on June 6, 1712, Sir Mark Cole and three other gentlemen were tried at the Old Bailey for riot, assault, and beating the watch. The account goes on to state that they were Mohocks, that they had attacked the watch in Devereux Street, slit two persons' noses, cut a woman in the arm so as to disable her for life, rolled a woman in a tub down Snow Hill, misused other women in a barbarous manner, and overset several coaches and chairs with short clubs loaded with lead at each end. The defence was very curious. The prisoners denied that they were Mohocks, and alleged that they were "Scowrers," who had gone out with a magistrate's warrant to scour the streets, arrest Mohocks and other offenders, and deliver them to justice. This plea did not prevail, and they were convicted; but the fact that it was put forward suggests an interesting possibility in the history of the Scowrers. It seems to indicate that they may originally have been a sort of vigilance committee for preserving order in the streets, and that the authorities occasionally availed themselves of their assistance for this purpose. In this case the original aim of the association must have been gradually perverted. *Optimi corruptio pessima*, and the sheep-dogs must have taken to worry the flock.

It is perhaps worth noting that the Scowrers, even after

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the fall (if fall there was), were fond of posing in mock heroic form as the champions of respectability, proclaiming it their business to take care that citizens went home betimes, instead of wasting their substance at taverns.

TOPE : My dear Knight, my dear Will Rant, thou art the Prince of Drunkards and Scowrers ; thou art a noble scavenger, and every night thou clearest the streets of scoundrel Bullies, and of idle Rascals, and of all Ale-toasts and Sops in Brandy.

WILDFIRE : And the taverns of tradesmen and of sober rogues of business, who should be at their cheating calling, or watching their wives at home.\*

The same strain reappears in *The Spectator's* manifesto of the Mohock Emperor. But, in truth, none of the guardians of the night in those days seem to have been beyond reproach. We learn from Mr. Davey (*The Pageant of London*, ii. 378) that the watchmen, linkmen, and lamplighters were all more or less in league with the footpads. Gay tells the same story :—

Though thou art tempted by the linkman's call,  
Yet trust him not along the lonely wall ;  
In the midway he'll quench the flaming brand,  
And share the booty with the pilfering band.

*Trivia.*

It is hard to understand how the brutal and senseless rowdyism of the Mohocks can ever have been regarded as a serious political movement, but suspicions to this effect did, as we have seen, actually arise. It was a period, be it remembered, which was seething with intrigue. The Queen, at once stupid and obstinate, was surrounded by clever and unscrupulous statesmen in her council chamber, and subjected to feminine influence, which was equally unscrupulous, in her closet. A Stuart restoration was so eminently possible that politicians were strongly tempted to make themselves safe with both sides. Political life thus became enveloped in an atmosphere of suspicion, under which even ordinary occurrences were apt to be

\* *The Scowrers.*

distorted into plots. Swift's fears for his own personal safety were, as usual, very pronounced ; but this feeling is well illustrated by an incident which he relates. He tells Stella that "a poor fellow" named Burr had called on him with a present of oranges. But Swift would not see him. "Perhaps it might be only some beggar who wanted a little money. Perhaps it might be something worse. Let them keep their poison for their rats. I don't love it" (*Works*, iii. 99).

The Tories, whose own hands were none too clean, accused the Whigs of all sorts of treasonable schemes against the Queen and her Government. For instance, when certain screw bolts were found to be missing from some of the timbers of St. Paul's, this was at once construed into a Whig plot for the destruction of the Queen and Ministers during service on Thanksgiving Day. Perhaps the strangest of all was the supposed Pistol-plot against Harley. According to Swift, a band-box was sent to Harley containing three loaded pistols, so arranged as to explode when the string with which the parcel was fastened was removed. Swift, suspecting something, cut the string carefully, and contrived to open the parcel without discharging the pistols (*Works*, iii. 63). The incident at first caused considerable excitement ; but very soon persistent rumours arose to the effect that the whole thing was a hoax, and that the so-called pistols were nothing more deadly than some of the iron cases then in common use for holding ink and pens. The Whigs went so far as to declare that it was a trick entirely devised by Swift himself ; but whether this be true or not, the whole story is very curious. In like manner the ravages of the Mohocks were also ascribed to the political designs of the Whigs, and this charge is dealt with in a satirical ballad called "Plot upon Plot" :—

You wicked Whigs ! What can you mean ?  
 When will your plotting cease  
 Against our most renowned Queen,  
 Her Ministry and peace ?

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You sent your Mohocks next abroad,  
 With razors arm'd, and knives ;  
 Who on night-walkers make inroad,  
 And scared our maids and wives :  
 They scoured the Watch, and windows broke,  
 But 'twas their true intent,  
 (As our wise Ministry did smoke,)  
 T' o'erturn the Government.

The Whigs ridiculed the accusation, pointing out that most of those apprehended as Mohocks proved to be only common thieves or footpads, and declared that the tales of these atrocities had been deliberately exaggerated by the Tories in order to discredit their political opponents. Later critics seem rather to incline to this view, which certainly derives some support from the fact that the Mohocks, always elusive figures, seem to have faded into the background soon after the Proclamation in 1712. The inference drawn is that they never existed at all in any large numbers ; but this is not necessarily correct. They might afford to indulge in their riotous pastimes so long as they had to fear no stouter opponents than the watch. But the offer of a large reward for the apprehension of each Mohock would bring a great many more enemies into the field, and they may have prudently concluded that under these circumstances the game was not worth the candle.

Swift, at any rate, was fully convinced, not only of their existence, but of the political aim of their proceedings ; and he deliberately formulates a shocking charge against Prince Eugene of Savoy in connection with them. Prince Eugene, who arrived in London on January 5, 1712, charged with a mission from the Emperor to regain the adherence of England to the coalition against France, was not a particularly welcome visitor to the Ministry, who were endeavouring to bring the War of the Spanish Succession to an end. He seems to have made no secret of his Whig sympathies, but there are no sufficient reasons for supposing him to be guilty of the designs against Harley's life imputed to him by Swift. After declaring that the Prince had a natural tincture of Italian cruelty, and would



“at any time sacrifice a thousand men’s lives to a caprice of glory or revenge,” Swift proceeds :—

“He had conceived an incurable hatred for the treasurer, as the person who principally opposed this insatiable passion for war ; said ‘ He had hopes of others ; but that the treasurer was *un méchant diable*, not to be moved.’ Therefore, since it was impossible for him or his friends to compass their designs, while that minister continued at the head of affairs, he proposed an expedient often practised by those of his own country. ‘ That the treasurer [to use his own expression] should be taken off *à la negligence* ; that this might easily be done, and pass for an effect of chance, if it were preceded by encouraging some proper people to commit small riots in the night.’ And in several parts of the town, a crew of obscure ruffians were accordingly employed about that time, who probably exceeded their commission ; and mixing themselves with those disorderly people that often infest the streets at midnight, acted inhuman outrages on many persons, whom they cut and mangled in the face and arms, and other parts of the body, without any provocation.” \*

Swift admits the gravity of this accusation, but declares that it was established, not only by the testimony of persons present on the occasion, but also by intercepted letters and papers. No details of this testimony, however, are produced, and the charge is altogether inconsistent with everything that is known of Prince Eugene’s character.

It is clear from the nature of the outrages described that the Mohocks are referred to in the above passage. It is not accurate, however, to speak of them as obscure ruffians, for, whatever their imitators may have been, the original Mohocks came from the classes, not the masses.

Atrocious as their conduct was, it was free from the baser criminal motives. They had no personal profit in view, and “ mohocked ” simply, so to speak, for the fun of the thing. This was the distinctive feature of Scowrers and Mohocks alike, and it differentiates them from common thieves and plunderers. Their animating spirit is strangely persistent in

\* *History of the Four Last Years of Queen Anne.*

human nature, and they have had precursors in many ages. We may see them in the "Ribauds" of France under Philip II. in 1180, who, curiously enough, acquired a sort of recognised position, under the supervision of an officer of the royal household called "Le Roi des Ribauds." This monarch, who had some quaint duties and still quainter privileges, used to exercise freely on the Ribauds the royal prerogative of taxation. The Ribauds might have their fun, but they must pay for it in the shape of fines, which their king was authorised to impose. And as the fines helped to swell the State revenue, it is possible that the State authorities did not take too morose a view of the Ribaud excesses. Under Louis XI. the streets of Paris were raided by the Joncheurs, the Lost Children, the Clique Patins, and the Jolly Archers, conspicuous among whom was Villon. They would turn the contents of shops into the gutter, seize upon the baskets of the fishwomen and hawk their contents through the streets, and play the Mohock generally. In the first half of the seventeenth century Paris had her Rougets and Grisons, young aristocrats who played the Mohock in distinctive costumes of red and grey respectively; and England perhaps can boast of a Royal Mohock in Harry the Madcap prince. The Mohocks have also had successors. Soon after the accession of George IV. to the throne in 1820 there was a recrudescence, though in a milder form, of Mohock rowdyism; and attacks on the watch—"boxing the Charlies" as the phrase went—once more became fashionable among the wilder spirits of London. These revelries, however, were rudely disturbed by the establishment, in 1829, by Sir Robert Peel of an efficient body of police, whose successors are still endeared to us under the pet name of "peelers." These proved much more capable of dealing with disorder than the incompetent watchmen whom they replaced. At the end of the eighteenth century there were 803 watchmen in the City of London, "generally aged, often infirm, and the honest among them very frequently half-starved." Their wages varied from 8½d. to 1s. 6d. a night. In the other metropolitan districts, including Westminster, Southwark, and

part of Kensington, there were 1,241 watchmen, very similar in age and physical condition, but, in the wealthier districts, rather better paid.\*

Yet again, in early Victorian days, there was another Mohock outburst under the auspices of the Marquis of Waterford; and once more knockers and bell-handles were wrenched off, public monuments injured, lights extinguished, and crockery smashed. From the *Annual Register* of 1837 we learn that Lord Waterford, having arrived at Bergen, began to play in the streets "the pranks by which he has acquired a very equivocal reputation in the United Kingdom." This form of humour, however, was quite wasted upon the local authorities, the Marquis being promptly knocked down by a watchman, and taken up half dead. The same authority tells us that, in the following year, he and some other men of fashion were convicted at Derby Assizes of trying to overturn a caravan, screwing up a toll-bar keeper, and painting houses and people red. For these recreations they were fined £100 apiece.

So far as decent society is concerned, this seems to have been the last flicker of expiring savagery, in one of its lowest and most senseless forms, and the possibility of any rekindling of it is exceedingly remote. Nowadays we should be disgusted no doubt at its impropriety, but we should be still more bored by its stupidity. The last tattered remnants of the Mohock mantle have fallen upon the hooligans of the proletariat, and there, it may be safely predicted, they will remain, unless red ruin and the breaking up of laws should hurl back our civilisation to the outworn days before Queen Anne was dead.

\* Colquhoun, *On the Police of the Metropolis*.

## II. THE VIRTUOSI

TO a great extent the memory of these worthies has been swamped in that of the movement with which they were associated; yet they were prominent figures in the society of their own times. Fame and notoriety contributed alike to their reputation. Praise and ridicule were alternately their portion to drink; and, strange to say, they deserved them both. Their story is rather a tangled skein to unravel, and to appreciate it properly we must take a glance at the circumstances under which they arose.

When the end of the fifteenth century was reached, philosophy, in the hands of the Schoolmen, had become flat, stale, and unprofitable. It had degenerated into a useless dialectic, and its wordy warfare, chiefly about words, left none of the disputants any wiser than before. "The same knots were tied and untied, the same clouds were formed and dissipated" (Whewell, *Hist. Ind. Sci.*, i. 340). Men grew weary of circling round the same well-worn path, weary of the grey twilight which brooded heavily over their thought. But the dawn was at hand. The revival of learning was spreading on every side, and the gates of Scholasticism were soon to feel its impulse. In the bright heart of Italy there rose a revolt against the lifeless logomachies which wrangled over a barren metaphysic but left the realities of life untouched. Back to Nature! was the cry. Out from the cloister into the open air! Cut loose from the outworn speculations of the past, and follow the large promise of the present! Look outwards, not inwards, for the light of knowledge, and seek truth, not in empty theory, but in actual experiment. Leonardo da Vinci, Giordano Bruno, and Galileo led the way in Italy, while in England, Francis Bacon, in spite of some personal limitations, triumphantly

established the New Philosophy on secure foundations. The main principle of his system is so well known that only the briefest account of it is needed here. The syllogistic or deductive method of reasoning proceeds from the general to the particular, from a larger to a smaller proposition. To take a simple instance: All acids will stain litmus paper red (major premiss); oil of vitriol is an acid (minor premiss); therefore it will stain litmus paper red (conclusion). In form the reasoning is irrefragable, but the general proposition on which it rests—the major premiss of the syllogism—can only be established itself as an *inference* from a number of particular experiences or experiments showing that various particular acids do act in this manner. Now this inference is plainly a reversal of the deductive method, for it proceeds from the particular to the general, from the smaller to the larger. It is, in fact, a logical extension of experience. Experience having shown that in a large number of cases particular acids stain litmus paper red, thought proceeds to infer that the rule may be applied to all acids. This process is termed induction. What number of particular instances will justify such a general inference, or in other words will suffice for a complete induction, varies according to circumstances. This, however, is a question which need not detain us now; we are only concerned to appreciate the general distinction between deduction and induction. The Syllogistic or Deductive method of inquiry Bacon discarded as a mere method of disputation, in favour of the Inductive method, by which alone he declared that scientific discovery could be achieved. He therefore urged that the theorising philosophies of ancient speculation should be replaced by an experimental philosophy of facts. Nature could only be learnt and subdued by investigation and inquiry. Experiment, endless experiment, could alone unlock the doors of the treasure-house of knowledge.

His message was eagerly accepted, the ideas of the New Philosophy spread apace, and in spite of the troublous times, which were sadly hostile to scientific research, experiments became the fashion. Bacon died in 1626, and some-

where about 1645, "Divers worthy persons inquisitive into Natural Philosophy and other parts of human learning, and particularly of what hath been called the New Philosophy or experimental philosophy," agreed to meet once a week to discourse on these subjects. Their names were Dr. John Wilkins, Dr. John Wallis, Dr. Jonathan Goddard, Dr. George Ent, Dr. Christopher Merrett, Mr. Foster, and Mr. Theodore Haake. This little knot of men may, perhaps, inasmuch as they were the first to combine for practical scientific effort, be described as the first of the Virtuosi. From this nucleus some fifteen years later the Royal Society arose. A small penalty was exacted for non-attendance at the meetings, and a small weekly subscription was raised to defray the cost of experiments; but politics, theology and gossip were severely excluded from their discourses. The earlier meetings were held in London; but, in 1648, Dr. Wilkins, having been made Warden of Wadham College, retired to Oxford, whither he was followed by Dr. Wallis and Dr. Goddard. Oxford was at that time a centre of great intellectual activity, "and was also frequented by some gentlemen of philosophical minds, whom the misfortunes of the kingdom and the security and ease of a retirement among gownsmen had drawn thither." Accordingly, Wilkins had no difficulty in establishing an Oxford branch, as it were, of the London society, fully equal in repute to the parent stem. Besides Wallis and Goddard it numbered among its members Dr. Seth Ward, Robert Boyle, Thomas Bathurst, Laurence Rooke, Robert Hook, and, more illustrious than all, Christopher Wren. Wren's modern fame rests chiefly on his architecture, but his other attainments were many and brilliant. He was born on October 20, 1632. Twenty-two years later Evelyn speaks of him as "that miracle of a youth," and Barrow described him as "*prodigium olim pueri, nunc miraculum viri, imo dæmonium hominis.*" About 1649 he became a fellow commoner at Wadham under Wilkins. He was an acute mathematician, Professor of Astronomy at Gresham College, Savilian Professor of Astronomy at

Oxford, skilled in dynamics, proficient in navigation, and almost the founder of meteorology. He had a ready inventive faculty, and is credited with fifty-three inventions and discoveries, nearly all of which were of practical utility. Thus, he devised, among other things, a night weather-cock which registered its movements, a self-registering thermometer, a pendulum for establishing a standard measure of length, and a rain-gauge. He also invented a method of injecting fluid into the veins, which facilitated the transfusion of blood, soon to become so fashionable an experiment. He was President of the Royal Society from 1680 to 1682, but during the latter part of his life he was too busy with architecture to pursue scientific research.

A few words are also due to the remarkable man who was practically the founder of the Royal Society. John Wilkins, born 1614, was the son of an Oxford goldsmith, himself "a very ingeniose man with a very mechanical head." He delighted in experiments and evidently had learning and abilities above his station. The son followed in the father's footsteps. In early life he published a work designed to prove that the moon was habitable and accessible by flight, which probably suggested Paltock's story of *Peter Wilkins*. He married Cromwell's widowed sister, Robina French, and took the Parliamentary side during the Civil War. But he was a broad-minded and tolerant man, and many Royalists (Evelyn among them) held him in high esteem. During his wardenship of Wadham he made it an intellectual centre to which many distinguished men of both parties were attracted. Dr. Seth Ward is a notable instance. He had suffered severely for his loyalty to the King, having been ejected by the Parliamentary party from his fellowship at Sidney Sussex; but after this misfortune he migrated to Wadham to enjoy the companionship of Wilkins. Among the Virtuosi of Wadham was one Walter Pope, Gresham Professor of Astronomy, and one of the early Fellows of the Royal Society. In 1658 he was Junior Proctor, and in this capacity successfully

resisted an attempt to abrogate the statute which required cap and gown to be worn. These were regarded suspiciously as relics of Romanism. It is perhaps doubtful whether the present distaste of the undergraduate for academic attire can fairly be referred to the same religious scruples; but the distaste itself has quite a venerable antiquity, being at least as old as the days of Sir Kenelm Digby. Pope was also the author of the quaint Memoirs of the highwayman Claude du Val, which are preserved in the Harleian Miscellany.

Meanwhile Wilkins did not lose touch with his fellow Virtuosi in London, and we hear of meetings at the Bull Head Tavern in Cheapside in 1658 and 1659 at which he was present. In the latter year he was made Master of Trinity, Cambridge, and though he was deprived of this post at the Restoration, he readily consoled himself with his beloved experiments. Nothing came amiss to his indefatigable energy. Thus, at one time he is busied with a treatise on the still obscure subject of telepathy; at another, John Evelyn, on paying him a visit, finds him engaged in "contriving chariots." Probably his politics were not very acrid, and in any case he did not remain in permanent disfavour. In 1662, Seth Ward being made Bishop of Exeter, Wilkins was appointed to a deanery under him; and in 1668, by the exertions of the Duke of Buckingham, he was promoted to the bishopric of Chester. Aubrey, in one of those vivid personal sketches which make his *Brief Lives* such delightful reading, has left us a pleasing picture of him. "He was no great read man, but one of much deepe thinking, and of a working mind, and a prudent man as well as ingeniose. . . . He was a lustie, strong growne, well sett, broad-shouldered person, cheerful and hospitable." Evidently a typical case of the *mens sana in corpore sano*.

By 1659 the little society had greatly increased both in numbers and reputation. The meetings could no longer be conveniently held in private lodgings or in a tavern; and its influence had made itself felt so much that Robert Boyle described it as "The Invisible College." Accordingly,



in 1660, it was formally constituted as a Society "for the promotion of all kinds of experimental philosophy," and on April 22, 1663, it was incorporated under the name of "The Royal Society of London for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge." The expression "natural" knowledge in this title had a special significance then which may easily escape our notice now. It proclaimed the purpose of the New Philosophy, to cast off the works of darkness and put on the whole armour of light. It was a challenge flung by the knights of the young science, the "Ministers of Nature," to the hosts of superstition, who sought for knowledge in witchcraft, divination, and the dark realms of the supernatural generally. On the whole they made their challenge good, but not, as we shall see, without a struggle.

At the same time a Charter was granted to it by Charles II., who was therein described as its founder and patron, and who, though rather fond of poking fun at his *protégés*, retained a certain interest in it through life. Gresham College warmly welcomed the young Society, and for some fifty years remained closely connected with it. For a considerable time the meetings of the Royal Society were held at the College, where their instruments, books, "rarities," and other belongings were also deposited. Moreover, many of the Fellows of the College became Fellows also of the Royal Society. Consequently the history of the Virtuosi is closely interwoven with that of the two Institutions.

As soon as the Royal Society had settled down to its work investigations were commenced on a colossal scale. Nothing was too large to daunt these scientific adventurers; nothing too small to be beneath their notice. With the same zeal they would pursue the discovery of the longitude or discuss the respective heights of Og, the King of Bashan, and Goliath. To cull a few specimens from a very long list, their inquiries dealt with astronomy, meteorology—including showers of fish and frogs and the "vermination" of the air; with the chemical qualities of watersprings, in reference to their fitness for brewing and other purposes;

with "the water blasts of Tivoly, floating islands of ice, and the shining of dew in a common of Lancashire and elsewhere"; with mineralogy, earthquakes, and the habits and observations of divers; with metallurgy, agriculture, pisciculture, and poisons. Monsters and their anatomy came in for special attention, as well as surgical operations and sympathetic cures; "pendulum clocks, rare guns, experiments in refraction, of a way to make use of eggs in painting instead of oil, of the island Hirta in Scotland, of the whispering-place at Gloucester, of the Pike of Tenariff." The programme was comprehensive, but to the best of their ability every means was taken to ensure accuracy. Some of the Fellows were deputed to study the literature of the various subjects, others to prosecute inquiries among seamen, travellers, and other specialists. With regard to experiments at the expense of the Society, it was ordained that as far as might be they should be performed before the Society, or, if this were impossible, in the presence of at least two curators appointed for the purpose. Sprat, afterwards Bishop of Rochester, writing in 1668, tells us that the Royal Society "set their faces against the superfluity of talking, and the luxury and redundance of speech," an offence which he declares ought to be "plac'd among those general mischiefs, such as the Dissention of Christian Princes and the want of Practice of Religion. They have exacted," he continues, "from all their members a close, naked, natural way of speaking, positive expressions, clear senses, a native easiness, bringing all things as near the mathematical plainness as they can, and preferring the language of artizans, countrymen, and merchants, before that of wits or scholars."

All this seems admirable common sense. And yet through the last half of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century the Virtuoso, according to popular ideas, was a contemptible crank, superstitious and gullible, and interested only in the eccentric and the monstrous: a sham philosopher, vain and shallow, whose ostensible love of learning was at root but an idle curiosity, and whose learning itself was studiously divorced from practical utility. How came

this conception to arise? The explanation is not really far to seek. The impetus of a new movement is always apt to outrun discretion, and the pursuit of the New Philosophy was no exception. The originators of the cult were serious scientific men, but they could not keep it clear of fantastic devotees whose extravagances did a great deal to discredit it. It seems clear that there were a good many of these about. Thomas Shadwell was a close observer and a clever delineator of the social life of his time. He was eminently what would now be called "topical," and prided himself, as we have seen, on being constantly up to date in the very slang of the day. We may feel sure, therefore, that in *Sir Nicholas Gimcrack* (the Virtuoso in his play of that name) we get a good portrait of the Virtuoso of the seventeenth century in his ridiculous aspect. "A sot that has spent £2,000 in microscopes to find out the nature of eels in vinegar, mites in a cheese, and the blue of plums, which he has subtilly found out to be living creatures." Or again, "One who has broken his brains about the nature of maggots, who has studied these twenty years to find out the several sorts of spiders, and never cares for understanding mankind." He affects to learn swimming by lying on a table, with a frog in a bowl of water by his side, whose movements he imitates. Longvil, a young man of fashion, inquires, "Have you try'd in the water, sir?" "No, sir," replies Gimcrack; "but I swim most exquisitely on land. . . . I content myself with the speculative part of swimming; I care not for the Practick. I seldom bring anything to use; 'tis not my way. Knowledge is my ultimate end."

Here we have one of the commonest of the taunts levelled at the Virtuosi, which crops up constantly in contemporary writers. Shadwell repeats it more than once:—

BRUCE: What does it concern a man to know the nature of an ant?

LONGVIL: Oh! it concerns a Virtuoso mightily: so it be knowledge, 'tis no matter.

Perhaps some of the Virtuosi deserved it, but the reproach in itself is of rather slender merit. As Bacon aptly

observed, there should be experiments of "light" as well as of "fruit"; and knowledge is not necessarily useless because it cannot immediately be reduced to a cash value. Moreover, the knowledge disdained as barren will often turn the tables on the scoffer by suddenly proving valuable, and the experiment of light is transformed into an experiment of fruit. But whatever may have been true of the Gimcracks among the Virtuosi, no such charge can be brought against the leaders of the movement. Indeed, Boyle speaks of the New Philosophy as valuing "no knowledge but as it has a tendency to use," and warmly praises the industry, broad-mindedness, humility, and teachableness of the members of the Invisible College. They were, in truth, earnest votaries of applied science; and though their experiments sometimes carried them into strange regions, practical utility was ever before their eyes.

The charge of credulity had somewhat more substance in it, and even at the latter end of the eighteenth century the Society was a recognised butt for the practical joker. In a letter to Mann of March 5, 1777, Horace Walpole tells the story of a sailor who had broken his leg and was advised to communicate his case to the Royal Society. "The account he gave was, that having fallen from the top of the mast and fractured his leg, he had dressed it with nothing but tar and oakum, and yet in three days was able to walk as well as before the accident." The Society was much interested and asked for further details. The sailor persisted in declaring that he had used no other remedies, and a considerable correspondence passed between the parties. Finally, in a postscript to his last letter, the seaman added, "I forgot to tell your honours that the leg was a wooden one." However, the early Virtuosi of the genuine sort stoutly repudiated any leanings to credulity. They looked askance at chemists who sought for riches "by transmutations and the great elixir," or philosophers in such eager quest of the Philosopher's Stone that they saw "some footsteps of it in every line of Moses, Solomon, or Virgil." So far indeed were they from owning to credulity, that they were inclined to apologise for their excessive scepti-

cism. "To this fault of sceptical doubting the Royal Society may perhaps be suspected to be too much inclin'd; because they always professed to be so backward from settling of principles or fixing upon doctrines." To the same effect is a story told by Aubrey of Sir William Petty. At one of the annual meetings of the Royal Society on St. Andrew's Day, Aubrey (himself a Fellow), remarked that instead of St. Andrew, a better patron saint for the Society would have been St. George, or St. Isidore (a canonised philosopher). "No," said Sir William; "I would rather have had it on St. Thomas' Day, for he would not beleieve till he had seen and putt his fingers into the holes, according to the motto *Nullius in verba*." This was the motto ultimately selected by the Society out of six suggested by John Evelyn. The others were *Et Augebitur Scientia*; *Omnia probate*; *Quantum Nescimus*; *Ad majorem lumen* (rather a mysterious piece of Latin); and *Experiendo*. Petty is a good specimen of the best kind of Virtuoso. He was born on May 26, 1623, and was the son of a clothier at Romsey. From childhood he had strong mathematical and mechanical tastes. In early youth he was stranded in France with a broken leg, where for some time he was in desperate straits, and lived for a week, according to Aubrey, on two or three pennyworths of walnuts. However, he contrived to learn French, Latin, and Greek; he studied anatomy at Paris, and returning to England, entered himself at Brasenose. In 1649 he became Doctor of Physic, and in the following year, together with Dr. Wilkins, he performed the remarkable feat of reviving Ann Green, a criminal who had been hanged. He was also made Professor of Music at Gresham College. He was one of Cromwell's Commissioners for Oxford, and it was under Cromwell's orders that he also made his great survey of Ireland. Among many other things he invented a double-keeled boat, anticipating the principle of the *Calais-Douvres*, which beat the mail packet from Dublin to Holyhead by fifteen hours. He also invented "a wheel to ride upon," possibly something resembling the two-wheeled hobbyhorse which came into fashion for a short time in 1819. He had married the

daughter of Sir Hardress Waller, "a very beautifull and ingeniose lady, browne, with gloriose eies," and his sympathies were naturally Cromwellian. But after the Restoration he soon came into favour with Charles II., "who was mightily pleased with his discourse," and the Duke of York. Aubrey thus sums him up: "A proper handsome man, measured six foot high, good head of browne haire, moderately turned up. . . . Beautiful grey eyes. In disposition εὐσπλαγχνος." He was a sound political economist. Pepys, who was President of the Royal Society in 1684, praised him as an excellent Commissioner of the Navy, and Evelyn declared that there was no better Latin poet living. Nor did he lack some lighter accomplishments. He was, it seems, a capital mimic, and could imitate incomparably the pulpit style of the Presbyterian, the Independent, the Capuchin, or the Jesuit. He had, moreover, a sense of humour, which once, at least, stood him in good stead. Sir Hierome Sankey, a swashbuckling Anabaptist, who claimed to cast out devils, and notably a "walking devil" named "Tuggin," sent him a challenge. Petty was very short-sighted, and having, as the challenged party, the right to nominate place and weapon, appointed a dark cellar and a carpenter's axe. This turned the challenge to ridicule, and the matter dropped.

Petty was thoroughly imbued with the scientific spirit which alone can give value to scientific research. Sir Kenelm Digby is a representative instance, among the early Virtuosi, of those who, for lack of this spirit, became scientific castaways. He is a striking figure, with a childhood made tragic by his father's execution, and a boyhood glorified by a romantic passion. Goodly to look upon, noble in address, and gigantic in strength. He once, with one hand, lifted a chair with a man sitting on it. "Had he been drop't out of the clowdes in any part of the world he would have made himselfe respected. No man knew better how to abound, and how to be abased, and either was indifferent to him." A diplomat, a courtier, a linguist, an author, a traveller, a philosopher, and a filibuster, whatever he put his hand to he did with his

might. In a description which he gives of himself he observes that his temperament "cannot keep itself in mediocrity, but will infallibly fall into some extreme." His early love for the beautiful Venetia Stanley never really faltered. Undaunted by difficulties, through evil repute and good repute, he persisted indomitably till he had made her his wife, and was never really consoled for her early death. His love of science was genuine enough, and even in prison he gladly turned to it. But his researches were marred by his extravagant superstitions, and Stubbes, a bitter enemy of the Royal Society, called him "the Pliny of our age for lying." His famous salve of sympathy for the cure of wounds was a horrible mess, of which the first ingredient was "moss of a ded man's head 2 oz." The cure was applied, not to the wound itself, but to the weapon which inflicted it, or to a cloth stained with the sufferer's blood. "Roman vitriol," which appears to be sulphate of iron, and Roman vitriol mixed with gum tragacanth, were also used as sympathetic powders. But even Boyle, who had judicious doubts about Digby's theories, writes that "he hath many excellent secrets and experiments of all sorts, yea, some arcana of the highest nature." These seem to have consisted, however, chiefly of quack medicines like the *Virga Aurea*, and misty theories of the occult properties of gems and so forth. He fed his wife on capons fattened with vipers to preserve her beauty, and treated her with snail broth for consumption. The troublous times in which he lived brought him many a buffet, but they never quenched his love of learning, and he took a lively interest in the formation of the Royal Society, of which he became a Fellow. On the death of his wife he retired to Gresham College to seek comfort for her loss in scientific experiment. For some years he wandered over the Continent collecting scientific treasures, and when he returned for the last time to England to end his days, his house—"the last fair house westward in the north portico of Covent Garden"—became the regular resort of mathematicians, chemists, philosophers, and literary men. He died on June 11, 1665, having been born in 1603.

But indeed it must be fairly admitted that even among the true Virtuosi some strange beliefs and opinions still lingered. Nor is this to be wondered at. Science was only just emerging from the mists of superstition, and it was impossible that these should be dispelled by the first ray of sunrise. Physiology had hardly risen above the stage when digestion was regarded as the work of the demon Archæus, who resided in the stomach. Astronomy still smacked of astrology, chemistry of alchemy, and medicine had to struggle against or even make terms with a thousand and one quack remedies. In the *Polygraphice* of Dr. William Salmon, M.D., published in 1701, there are elaborate directions for the manufacture of gold and silver. To persons in indigent circumstances the following prescription for making gold may be of interest: "Marry Jupiter to Venus, and their offspring to Sol by the means of priest Mercury ; put them to bed (in the life of Phœbus) for three whole days and nights, afterwards make them drunk with the spirit of the Daughter of Venus, then make a perfect conjunction with the eldest son of Saturn, and you shall have what you sought." To make this jargon partly intelligible, we are informed that Jupiter stands for tin, Venus for copper, Saturn for lead ; but even with this clue to the mystery gold-making does not seem to have been a thriving industry. Sir John Maundeville—an apostle of rigid veracity—tells us that of Paradise he could not speak properly, never having been there. Dr. Salmon, with a similar candour, admits that he cannot tell us what the Philosopher's Stone is, as he does not know, but he promises some valuable hints from earlier writers. These speak mysteriously of Spiritus Mercurii and the Solar Sulphur, of Red and Green Lions and the Flying Dragon, of the True Bird of Hermes, Ros Majalis, and so forth, but do not otherwise get us much "forrader." Descending into common life, Dr. Salmon tells us how artificial flesh may be made out of the crumb of bread, and artificial wines by methods which, in the public interest, it is kinder to conceal.

Bacon never quite shook off a belief in witchcraft ; and



even Isaac Newton, who became a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1671, and its President in 1703, had some weak joints in his scientific armour. The great astronomer had been, as he confessed, an astrologer first; and he was strongly attracted by the religious vagaries of the Cevennois. Curiously enough, too, in spite of his high mathematical attainments, his arithmetic was faulty, and, when Master of the Mint, he was obliged to have his accounts made up for him. The earlier *Philosophical Transactions* of the Society show how slowly the old ideas relaxed their grip on the new thought. Thus in 1694 we hear of a very great and dangerous wen which was cured by the application of a dead man's hand, "whence the patient felt such a cold stream pass to the heart that it did almost cause in him a fit of swooning." Touching for the king's evil (scrofula) still claimed the faith of the vulgar, though the practice died out in the reign of Queen Anne. But no less an authority than Robert Boyle testified to the therapeutic powers of Greatrix the Stroaker. This practitioner is said, on one occasion, to have chased a pain, by stroking, from the patient's head to his back, and thence through the right thigh and leg to his great toe. In this, its last ditch, the pain turned to bay, making the patient "roar out," but on further stroking it finally disappeared. Great drinkers, we are informed, have their eyes usually turned towards the nose, "the adducent muscles being often employed to let them see their loved liquor in the glass at the time of drinking." Hair, feathers, horns, and even teeth were by many regarded as vegetables, and capable of transplantation from one body to another. Another scientific enthusiast gives the details of a correlation which he had discovered between voice and character. "He that speaks in gamut is manly; C, Fa, Ut, may show one to be of ordinary capacity though good disposition; G, Sol, Re, Ut, to be peevish and effeminate, and of a weak and timorous spirit; Sharps are effeminate, Flats a manly or melancholick sadness." So, too, "*Semibriefs* may speak a temper dull and phlegmatic, *Minums* grave and serious, *Crotchets* a prompt wit, *Quavers* vehemency of passion," and so forth.

Phosphorescent light puzzled the virtuosi considerably, and many experiments were made with decayed wood, fish, and other substances. Shadwell, who shows a remarkably close acquaintance with the actual work of the Royal Society, has a mischievous dig at these. Sir Nicholas Gimcrack is asked to what use he puts his Pneumattick Engines. He replies, "I eclipse the light of rotten wood, stinking whittings, and Thornback, and putrid flesh when it becomes lucid."

LONGVIL : Will stinking flesh give light like rotten wood ?

SIR NICHOLAS : 'Tis frequent. I myself have read a Geneva Bible by a leg of pork.

At the end of the play Gimcrack declares that he will devote all his energies to the discovery of the Philosopher's Stone, adding, "I had like to have gotten it last year, but that I wanted Maydew, it being a dry season." This belief in the occult qualities of Maydew was a very sturdy superstition. Towards the end of the seventeenth century a whole set of experiments to determine its properties and composition was made by Thomas Henshaw, and recorded in the *Philosophical Transactions*. Having collected his Maydew he allowed it to stand all night, when he obtained from it a "gelly" like boiled starch. Further treatment of this jelly by heat produced a large mushroom. On other occasions Maydew produced "a bunch of frog-lice," a number of small creatures like tadpoles, and a swarm of gnats. Evaporation of the "putrified dew" yielded a greyish earth, which turned spring water purple, and at last, after repeated roastings, a small quantity was obtained of a fine white salt, "which looked on through a good microscope seemed to have sides and angles in the same number and figure as Rock Petre." We learn also from the *Philosophical Transactions* that Boyle claimed to have made air "wholesom for inspiration" by treating pounded coral or oyster shells with vinegar, and Hooke by mixing oil of tartar with vitriol, or spirit of wine with turpentine. Critics might fairly make merry over experiments like these, but they represent a stage through which science in its infancy was bound to pass.

Many, too, were the inventions of the Virtuosi; some of them useful, some fantastic; and in these days of aviation it is interesting to learn that Hooke, who, among other works, wrote a description of the Tower of Babel, is said to have invented thirty different modes of flying. The inventions of Wren and Petty have already been referred to. Besides these, Papin and Savery made some real advances in the application of steam power, and even the Bone Digesting Machine invented by the former seems to have been more than a mere toy. Shadwell's *Virtuoso* is, of course, a prolific inventor. He too has learnt how to fly—theoretically; and he has invented, among other things, a sort of megaphone on a magnificent scale, which he calls a Stentrophonical Tube. "I have thought of this," he explains, "to do the King service; for when I have perfected it, there needs but one parson to preach to a whole county; the King may then take all the Church lands into his own hands, and serve all England with his chaplains in ordinary."

LONGVIL: This is a most admirable project. But what will become of the other parsons?

SIR NICHOLAS: It is no matter; let 'em to make woollen cloth and advance the manufacture of the nation; or learn to make nets and improve the fishing trade.

An echo of this remarkable argument may still be heard in some of the political controversies of to-day.

Among the graver speculations of the Virtuosi was the transfusion of blood for therapeutic purposes. The origin of the idea is generally attributed to Wren, who commenced experiments in this direction about 1659. But Aubrey relates how, "at the Epiphanie, 1649," Francis Potter had communicated to him "his notion of curing disease, &c., by the transfusion of blood." The theory was founded on the idea that almost all diseases were due to a morbid condition of the bodily fluids, particularly the blood, and consequently that disease might be expelled by drawing off the patient's vitiated blood and transfusing that of a healthy animal. For a short time it was in considerable vogue both in England and France. In 1667 an experiment was made by Dr. King, to which Pepys alludes, of transfusing the

blood of a sheep into a poor student named Coga, who submitted to the operation for a guinea. In this case no ill results followed. But in France some similar experiments ended fatally, and the practice was discontinued. Shadwell makes Gimcrack boast that by applying this treatment to a mangy spaniel and a sound bulldog he had turned the spaniel into a sound bulldog and the bulldog into a mangy spaniel. This is a caricature, of course ; but it is hardly more grotesque than Dr. Thomas Sherly's "Philosophical essay declaring the probable causes of stones in the greater world, in order to find out the causes and cure of the stone in the Kidneys and Bladder of men." Whatever analogies may exist between the macrocosm and the microcosm, they can hardly be pressed to this disconcerting length ; and the modern patient may certainly be grateful that stone in the bladder is no longer treated on geological principles. But, as has been said, medicine was still in a somewhat tentative stage. Aubrey declares that Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, was a very poor physician. Jonathan Goddard, according to the same authority, had but three or four prescriptions with which he treated all diseases. Among these, no doubt, were the famous "Goddard's Drops," the recipe for which he is said to have sold to Charles II. for £5,000. A subtle revenge this, if the story be true ; for that monarch had ejected him from the wardenship of Merton College, Oxford. Goddard was an unwearied experimenter, and was rather exploited by the Royal Society on this account. Aubrey tells us that "they made him their drudge, for when any curious experiment was to be donne they would lay the taske on him." Indeed, he took all his inquiries very seriously ; for we find him on February 10, 1663, reading to the Royal Society "A Discourse upon Eggs, containing ten signs whereby to distinguish new eggs from those which are stale." He died in harness in 1675, being smitten with apoplexy "on his way home from a club of Virtuosi who were wont to meet at the Crown in Bloomsbury."

The New Philosophy was not only subjected to the

ridicule of the ignorant, but also encountered some angry opposition from the learned. The Aristotelians denounced its audacious attempt to subvert the ancient schools, and flouted its somewhat enthusiastic pretensions. The following is an extract from a satirical poem commonly ascribed to Glanville :—

At Gresham College a learned knott  
 Unparallel'd designs have lay'd,  
 To make themselves a corporation  
 And know all things by demonstration.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

This college will the whole world measure,  
 Which most impossible conclude,  
 And navigation makes a pleasure  
 By finding out the longitude :  
 Every Tarpaulian shall then with ease  
 Saile any ship to the Antipodes.  
 The Gresham College shall hereafter  
 Be the whole World's university ;  
 Oxford and Cambridge are our laughter ;  
 Their learning is but pedantry ;  
 These new Collegians do assure us  
 Aristotle's an ass to Epicurus.

The Virtuosi were conciliatory and deferential, but they stuck to their guns. "Would they have us," exclaims Sprat in reference to the critics, "make our eyes behold things at no farther distance than they [the ancients] saw? That is impossible; seeing we have the advantage of standing upon their shoulders." And again, "It is best for the Philosophers of this age to imitate the antients as their children; to have their blood deriv'd down to them; but to add a new complexion and life of their own." He saw with some anxiety that the new method would have to fight for its life, and he accordingly elaborated a defence under seventeen heads. In this he argues that the Experimental Philosophy (1) will not injure education, (2) or the Universities; (3) that it is useful in practical life; (4) that it will not (as urged) make men disputatious, (5) or take up too much time, (6) or make men romantic, (7) or presumptuous and obstinate, (8) or draw them from business, (9) or neglectful of the wisdom of the past, (10) or interfere with

practical work; (11) that it is a salutary occupation for the mind; (12) that it is not dangerous to religion, (13) or to the authority of Scripture; (14) that it suits the temper of the nation; (15) that it is "not prejudicial to mortification"; (16) that it is advantageous to manual occupations; (17) that it is a proper study for country gentlemen.

One of the ugliest features of the experiments of the *Virtuosi* was the atrocious cruelty practised upon animals. Vivisection (of course without anæsthetics) in the most appalling forms was employed, apparently without the faintest pang of reproach. Possibly the Cartesian doctrine that animals were insensible automata may have deadened their feelings. Akenside makes this one of the characteristics of his *Virtuoso* :—

Beasts, fishes, birds, snails, caterpillars, flies  
Were laid full low by his relentless hand,  
That oft with gory crimson was distained :  
He many a dog destroyed and many a cat.

The cruelty, too, was often heightened by the wantonness of the experiments, animals being tortured, not to obtain knowledge on some definite point, but apparently only for the purpose of seeing what happened. Thus, to take one of the milder specimens, we hear of an unfortunate carp "attempted to be fed with bread and sack, without success." But leaving these horrors, even the more sober researches of the *Virtuosi* display rather an untempered eagerness for the merely wonderful. Monstrosities of all kinds occupied a great deal of their attention; so too such natural curiosities as a fall of dew like butter, and a "shower of fishes judged to be whiting." In a satirical pamphlet called the *Transactioneer* these portents are described as "A shower of whittings. A shower of butter to dress them with." And indeed strange things seemed to happen in this uncritical age. At Christmas, 1693, according to the *Transactions*, Harlech in Merionethshire was suddenly invaded by "a kindled exhalation," which came across Cardigan Bay in the night, poisoning the grass and firing haystacks. The visitation lasted till late in the

summer of 1694, by which time its peculiarities had been more fully revealed. This mysterious exhalation was not like ordinary fire; it burnt with a weak blue flame which, in spite of its deleterious effects on crops and ricks, might be touched without injury by man. It was observed to come from a sandy and marshy spot in Carnarvonshire called Morva Bychan, and could be repelled or extinguished by any loud noise, such as that of drums or horns.

Fossils were the subject of much controversy among the Virtuosi, and various explanations were offered to account for them. To the orthodox they seemed conclusive evidence of the Deluge. Dr. Martin Lister, however, regarded them as independent natural products—*lapides sui generis*—which had no connection with real shells or other organic objects, but had been fashioned by Nature, apparently just for the fun of the thing. Beaumont developed this theory still further. Fossil shells, he declared, were not real shells petrified, but were a sort of arrested growth. The raw material of shells, or, as he terms it, “a shelly substance,” is diffused through all Nature, and consequently she “can as well produce shells in mines as in the sea.” He regarded the process as a form of vegetation produced by the “seminal root of life” which permeates the natural world, but which sometimes, as in the case of the fossil shell, makes a bad shot, and is “hindered by the inaptness of the place to proceed to give to these things a principle of life in themselves.” The seminal root of life he identified with the Dry Light of Heraclitus. John Woodward regarded fossils as the relics of real animals and claimed them as evidence of the Deluge, though he connected them with a curious theory of “the Vegetative motion” of the earth. But this and his other doctrines were severely criticised, particularly by John Arbuthnot. Woodward had a strange, ill-regulated mind, and rather a disagreeable temper. He was always falling out with his brother Virtuosi. In 1710 he was required by the Royal Society to apologise for some insulting expressions which he had addressed to Sir Hans Sloane. This he refused to do, and was accordingly expelled from the Council. His bitter tongue never deserted him.

In a duel with Dr. Mead which arose out of some quarrel over medical matters, Woodward's foot slipped and he fell. "Take your life," said his opponent. "Anything but your physic," was Woodward's retort. By his will he founded a lectureship at Cambridge with a stipend of £100 a year, for the perpetuation of his scientific theories. No less a person than Conyers Middleton was the first lecturer. Even in high quarters a belief was still held in the virtues of the so-called unicorn's horn (probably in most cases a fossil bone), and more than one experiment was made to ascertain whether snakes or spiders could cross a circle of powdered unicorn's horn or of Irish earth. So too Sir Robert Moray, when President of the Society, read a paper to prove that barnacles turned into birds, while Sir Kenelm Digby and Mr. Pellin were each prepared to vouch for the production of young vipers from the powdered liver and lungs of a viper. The viper was an object of much scientific attention in those days, and seems to have been credited with many peculiar properties. There is a story, vouched on oath, of a daughter of one of the Earls of Chester who was cured of epilepsy by wearing a girdle of viper skin wrapped up in linen. All went well with the patient for several months; but one day she felt a movement in her girdle, and on opening it discovered to her dismay six little vipers curled up in its folds. Indeed, the questions propounded by the Royal Society often show incidentally the extent of its ignorance. Thus formal inquiries were addressed to Sir Philberto Vernatti, a resident in Batavia, as to whether diamonds and other precious stones "grow again after three or four years in the same places where they have been digged out"; as to whether there be a hill in Sumatra "which burneth continually and a fountain which runneth pure balsam"; and again, "what ground there may be for that relation concerning horns taking root, and growing about Goa." The ground for this particular relation turned out to have no more scientific element than the easy morals of the Portuguese ladies. One of the Society's correspondents declared that the aborigines of Teneriffe could whistle loud enough to be heard five miles off. Sprat rather shies at



this, in spite of its being "seriously confirmed by a Spaniard and another Canary merchant." But he insists that it was a proper subject for the Society to investigate.

By degrees the true Virtuosi shook off these juvenile errors and indiscretions, and with them the pseudo-scientists who had done so much to bring their researches into disrepute. The latter rapidly degenerated into mere Curiosi, and perhaps deserved all the ridicule which they encountered. Steele in the *Tatler* (No. 216) takes Shadwell's Gimcrack as the type of these, and professes to reproduce his will. It is an amusing skit. The testator, after giving legacies of one box of butterflies, one drawer of shells, a female skeleton, a dried cockatrice, &c., makes the following bequest: "My eldest son John having spoke disrespectfully of his little sister whom I keep by me in spirits of wine, and in many other instances behaved himself undutifully towards me, I do disinherit, and wholly cut off from any part of this my personal estate, by giving him a single cockle shell."

Scientific inquiry had no real attractions for these men, and they became mere collectors of curiosities, or, as they preferred to call them, "rarities." Akenside's *Virtuoso* has a "rich museum of dimensions fair," in which, among other objects of interest, "a crocodile diffused a grateful shade." It was to minister to tastes like these that the Museums of Salter and the Tradescants came into existence. Salter, or Don Saltero, as Steele calls him (*Tatler*, No. 34), thus described his own collection:—

Monsters of all sorts are seen;  
Strange things in Nature as they grew so;  
Some relics of the Sheba Queen,  
And fragments of the famed Bob Crusoe.

Among the relics of the Sheba Queen was her milkmaid's hat. The collection also contained "The King of Morocco's tobacco pipe," and "Job's ears which grew on a tree." Tradescant's Museum was bequeathed in 1662 by the younger Tradescant to Elias Ashmole, who in turn bequeathed it in 1682 to the University of Oxford, where parts of it still remain in the Ashmolean Museum. Indeed,

institutions altogether more august yielded to the same craze. In the early years of the eighteenth century Dr. William Oliver reported to the Royal Society that among the "natural rarities" of the Royal Museum at Copenhagen there were hares' heads with horns, a petrified baby, a pair of stag's horns growing out of a piece of wood, and an egg laid by a woman. This last treasure was carefully authenticated. The lady, it seems, had laid a brace of eggs, one of which on being broken resembled an ordinary hen's egg, the other had been sent to Olaus Wormius "by very good hands," and had by him been presented to the Museum.

It was in France, however, that the spurious Virtuosity took deepest root. Stimulated by the rise of the Royal Society, some of "the choicest wits in France" attempted, about 1660, to form a similar society, "whose design it was to rescue the liberal sciences from the bondage of Scholastical obscurities, and to render things intelligible without obliging the studious to the unpleasing and perpetual task of first surmounting the difficulties of exotick words." This society met every Monday, and their discourses were compiled and edited by Eusebius Renaudot. In 1664 an Englishman named Havers (subsequently assisted by one Davies) was permitted to translate them, on condition that the names of the members should not be divulged. The conferences are curious but not very instructive. Usually two subjects were selected for discussion, and these were sometimes strangely assorted. For example, at one conference the subjects for debate were, (1) Is it easier to resist pleasure or pain? (2) Of the little hairy girl lately seen in this city. At another, (1) How long can man remain without eating? (2) Of the echo. Or again, (1) Of the origin of the winds. (2) Why none are contented with their lot? The conferences are described as "A general collection of Discourses of the Virtuosi of France upon questions of all sorts of Philosophy and other Natural Knowledge. Made in the Assembly of the Beaux Esprits at Paris by the most ingenious persons of that Nation." But in spite of this imposing description, it is clear that the most ingenious persons had few of the scientific pretensions

of the English Virtuosi. The discussions often show considerable cleverness, and a certain amount of rather undigested knowledge; but the trail of superstition is over them all. There is a serious discussion as to Incubi and Succubæ, and whether devils generate. The virtue of charms and amulets was generally admitted, though one debater cautiously adds that "confidence is a necessary condition for making the amulet efficacious." Metaphysical principles are postulated without scruple, and readily accepted as explanations. Thus the qualities of quicksilver are ascribed to its possessing an equal mixture of the principles of siccidity and humidity. Our old friend the unicorn's horn is treated rather roughly, yet it is recognised that "all horns have an Alexiterical virtue by which they resist feavers." On the physiological side we learn that memory is seated at the back of the head, for which reason "we scratch the hinder part of the head, as if to chase it, when we would remember anything." The French Virtuosi, unlike their English brethren, never rose above this level; and a century later, in 1763, *The Gentleman's Magazine* thus puts on record their absurdities: "The folly of the French Virtuosi at Paris is arrived at a great pitch. Collecting natural curiosities is in high vogue, and to that degree that no one is esteemed *de bon ton* who has not a collection. The decorations of some cabinets are more expensive than the curiosities, and savour so much of that *gout marqué* or *outré*, now so general in France, that the collections seem more like raree shows than like anything of a scientific nature."

In England the pseudo-Virtuosi had succumbed before this to the ridicule showered upon them. Following in Shadwell's footsteps, Ned Ward, in his *History of Clubs* and the *London Spy*, made merry in a somewhat coarse fashion at their expense, and Steele flicked them with polished raillery. *The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* were a more solid attack. This satire was projected by Pope, Swift, and Arbuthnot, though certain anticipations of *Gulliver* show the hand of Swift. Arbuthnot, being himself a Fellow of the Royal Society, and a learned man to boot,

was not at all disposed to spare the follies of the sham scientist. Woodward's extravagant doctrines came in for severe treatment, and the ancient shield in which the infant Martinus was cradled is evidently a hit at a doubtful antique which Woodward had been induced to purchase. Even philosophy proper does not escape. *Crambe*, on being told that substance was that which was subject to accidents, replied that soldiers must, in that case, be the most substantial people in the world: a dig at Locke. Arbuthnot's *Petition against the Catoptrical Victuallers* (being "certain Virtuosi disaffected to the Government" who propose to cook food by the sun's rays) is a lighter effort in the same strain, and is quite good reading even now. *The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* were never finished; but, in 1751, Richard Owen Cambridge attempted a dull and laborious continuation of them in his *Scribleriad*. This, however, fell quite flat; and indeed it was altogether belated, for the objects of its satire had practically disappeared.

Science truly must begin in wonder, but it ought not to remain there. And this really points the distinction between the true and the counterfeit Virtuosi. The comparative ignorance of the seventeenth century was the justification alike of Bacon's plea for experiments and of the wideness of the experimental system which the Virtuosi initiated. Where so little was known, who could say in what strange corners truth might lurk? And, consequently, from this standpoint, the procedure of the Virtuosi was strictly scientific. They felt that it was not for them to condemn anything offhand as impossible or absurd. On the contrary, the stranger the case presented, the greater the need for a scrupulous investigation of it. In fact, as Sprat pertinently remarks, the true and unwearied experimenter "often rescues things from the jaws of those dreadful monsters Improbability and Impossibility." At the outset, no doubt, there was not much to distinguish the work of the true from that of the sham Virtuoso; but the former soon learned to rise above the superstitions, the follies, and the trivialities in which the latter remained enmeshed to the end. The very ridicule which they incurred quickened

this process, for the Society was keenly sensitive to it, and keenly apprehensive of the injury which it might inflict on the interests of science. They had other opponents, philosophical and ecclesiastical, to reckon with ; but these "severe and frowning dogmatical adversaries" they feared less than "the Wits and Railleurs" of the age. Moreover—and this is important to observe—there was a profound philosophical conception underlying their multitudinous experiments, namely, the conception of the solidarity of all things. Under this conception the universe of our knowledge is treated, not as a mere collection of facts and objects, but as a systematic whole, with interrelations between all its components. Every part of this scheme is connected with every other part, and accordingly light thrown on one of its humblest elements may help to illumine the darkness in which its deepest mysteries are veiled. As Sprat, their historian, observes in a fine passage : "There is nothing of all the works of Nature so inconsiderable, so remote, or so fully known, but by being made to reflect on other things, it will at once enlighten them and show itself the clearer. Such is the dependence amongst all the orders of creatures, the sensitive, the rational, the natural, the artificial, that the apprehension of one of them is a good step towards the understanding of the rest. . . . This is truly to command the world : to rank all the varieties and degrees of things so orderly upon another, that, standing on the top of them, we may perfectly behold all that are below, and make them serviceable to the quiet, and peace, and plenty of man's life. And to this happiness there can be nothing else added, but that we make a second advantage of this rising ground, thereby to look the nearer into heaven."

### III. A GREAT PROCONSUL (GOVERNOR PITT)

THE sturdy splendour of our British dominion in the East is a marvel which becomes still more marvellous when we consider from what a sickly bantling it sprang. Feeble and ignorant counsels at home, unruly agents abroad, misfortune and opposition everywhere; these were its nursing mothers, and yet it survived. Here it is only possible to glance at its early history. The Spanish, the Portuguese, and the Dutch had all been before us in the East, and were little inclined to tolerate new competitors. Private adventurers like Raymond in 1591, and Wood in 1596, had perished in their attempts, and the Levant Company, incorporated in 1581 for trading overland with India, had not been a success. But the merchants of London, though checked, were not disheartened. Abandoning the idea of an overland traffic route, they determined to apply for a Royal patent to trade with India by the Cape. Queen Elizabeth was in favour of the project, but the Privy Council, dreading political difficulties with Spain, was opposed to it. However, the merchants at last prevailed, and on December 31, 1600, a charter was granted to the "Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading to the East Indies," giving them the privilege of exclusive trading with India for the term of fifteen years. New charters were granted by James I., Cromwell, and Charles II., and the constitution of the Company underwent some alterations from time to time, but these did not materially affect the character of its career. At first its efforts were directed mainly to the Spice Islands, but here the opposition which they encountered, chiefly from the



*Governor Pitt.*  
*after the painting by Kneller at Chesham.*

LONDON: EDWARD ARNOLD.





Dutch, and which culminated in the tragic massacre at Amboyna in 1623, diverted its attention to other quarters. Attempts were made to establish a trade with Persia, and also with Japan; but these met with no permanent success, and by degrees the Company's energies became concentrated on the Indian Peninsula. In 1610 Sir Henry Middleton tried to found a factory for the Company at Surat, but was repelled by the Portuguese. Two years later, however, Best, with two ships, utterly routed a much larger Portuguese force, and the factory at Surat was duly established. In 1611 a factory had been erected by Anthony Hippon at Masulipatam. In 1634 the Company got permission from the Mogul to trade in Bengal and the Ganges, and in 1640 Madras was founded by Francis Day, one of those bold spirits who built up the Company's greatness in spite of itself. Throughout the early history of the Company its success was perpetually hampered by the weakness and unwisdom of its home administration. The Court of Directors in London, ignorant of India and India's needs, thinking only of their profits, and nervously apprehensive of anything which might endanger these, could not discern the necessity of a resolute and enterprising policy. Those on the spot appreciated this necessity only too well. The greedy and treacherous natives by whom they were surrounded understood no argument but force. The Dutch and Portuguese, who applied this argument relentlessly, were hated but respected; the English, who met insults and injuries with nothing stronger than bribes or protests, were simply despised. Sir Edward Winter, while Governor of Madras, found that goods passing from inland to the settlement were not only subjected to irregular duties, but were often plundered by natives on the road. He complained of this to the local Governor, who replied that "when the English horns and teeth grew, then he would free them from the duties." Madras—or, as it was originally called, Fort St. George—was founded with the cordial approbation of the Company's servants in India, but more or less without the knowledge or consent of the English Directors, who did not learn the

full details till it was too late to recede. When they heard what had been done they were full of alarm and indignation, and rated Day and his coadjutors severely. The new settlement, however, was a success from the very beginning, and in 1653 was made into a separate Presidency. The rise of Madras may be taken as a typical instance of the toilsome ways by which the Company struggled into strength.

But the growth of the Company's prosperity brought some special dangers in its train. Piracy became so profitable that the Indian seas were filled with marauders of all nations; and in addition to these there grew up a strong body of domestic rivals—the Interlopers. The Company jealously resented encroachments on its monopoly by private traders, and any of these who fell into its hands in the East met with short shrift. But the temptations of illicit trade were too strong to be resisted, and in the reign of Charles II. the Interlopers had become so numerous that a determined effort was made to suppress them. And here the Company found that it had to reckon with the results of its shortsighted policy of practically precluding its employés from trading on their own account. The position of the Company's servants in the East was one of considerable discomfort and considerable peril. They were beset by dangers from disease and from human enemies, and the mortality among them ran very high. The chance of a fortune was to some extent an offset to the imminent risk of a grave; but the only road to a fortune lay through those private speculations in which they were forbidden to indulge. The Directors, not altogether unnaturally, objected to a practice under which the Company's interests might easily be sacrificed to those of its servants; but they attempted to enforce this objection with a rigour which, to say the least, was ill-advised. In 1676 the members of the Madras settlement complained that the Company "treated them only like those fowl we send a-fishing with a string about their necks, to make them disgorge as fast as they set foot ashore." The Governor, Sir William Langhorne, put forward these views

in what strikes one as a reasonable request. "Your servants," he writes, "who have gone through the burden and heat of the day for you (refraining from your own rich enclosures of the out and home trade) desire no more but the common and uncorrupted liberty of the Indian port to port trade." The Directors replied in effect that they would not be dictated to by their own servants, "and this shall serve as an answer to all the paragraphs of your letter of this kind." The discontent caused by this niggardly treatment aroused an amount of local sympathy with the Interlopers which greatly assisted their operations, and hampered the Company's efforts to suppress them. At the same time Interloping was no child's play. It called for a keen head and a stout heart, commercial insight, dexterity of resource, a ready wit, and, if need be, a ready sword. The successful Interlopers were men with some great qualities, and most famous among them all stands Thomas Pitt.

He was the second son of John Pitt, Rector of Blandford St. Mary, in Dorsetshire, where he was born on July 5, 1653. But he must have faced the world early in search of a fortune, for in December, 1675, we find him Interloping at Balasore. Many were the attempts made by the Company to bring "one Pytts," as he was then described, to book. In 1675 the Balasore Council of the Company were urgently instructed to arrest and send him to England; but Pitt slipped off quietly on a trading expedition to Persia and evaded them. In 1676 he was brought before the same council and required to reside under supervision at Madras, on pain of being deported to England. He appears to have promised compliance, but the promise was certainly not kept, and in 1677 the English Directors again urged his arrest and deportation. Here again, however, the Company suffered from the estranged sympathy of its servants, and Pitt remained at large. Moreover, he had many friends among the Company's officials in India, and apparently—though the circumstances are rather obscure—had married Jane Innes, a niece of Matthias Vincent, president of the Company's Hugli

Council, who later on joined him openly. In 1677, 1679, and 1680, Pitt seems to have made further expeditions into Persia; and in 1681, with characteristic audacity, he paid a flying visit to England, into the very jaws of his enemies. This was a rare chance for the Company, which forthwith applied for a writ of *Ne exeat regno* against him. But Pitt was too quick for them, and on February 20, 1682, escaped on board the *Crowne* to Balasore. The baffled Company sent out orders to Bengal for his arrest, adding, "When you have got him into your custody be sure to secure him, he being a desperate fellow, and one that we fear will not stick at doing any mischief that lies in his power." Concurrently with these orders one of the Company's ships, the *Welfare*, was sent off in hot haste to intercept Pitt before he could reach the Ganges. The reason for this illustrates the rather unbusinesslike methods of the Company. The lighter vessels of the Interlopers could get right up the river to Hugli, and take in cargoes direct from the interior. The Company's ships, on the other hand, were, or were supposed to be, too large to make this attempt, so they were accustomed to remain in Balasore road, while their lading was brought to them in lighter craft. In the present case, therefore, it was known that unless the *Welfare* could overtake Pitt in the open sea, he would escape, as in fact he did. A month later instructions were sent to Fort St. George to despatch a corporal and twenty soldiers to support the Company's agent, Hedges, who had been sent out on a tour of supervision, against "Thomas Pitts . . . a fellow of haughty, huffing, daring temper." Pitt, however, who at the best of times paid little heed to the threats of the Company, had probably learned during his visit to England the critical condition of its affairs. The Company's settlement at St. Helena was seething with discontent; that at Bombay was in open revolt. At home financial troubles were gathering round it; the opposition to its monopoly was growing dangerously strong; its own ranks were torn by faction, and an attempt was made by some of the stockholders, headed by Papillon, to have

the Company wound up, and a new one formed by public subscription. This attempt was defeated by the strenuous efforts of Sir Josiah Child, but Pitt evidently thought that the time had now come for an intelligent anticipation of events. Accordingly, he suddenly appeared at Balasore "in a hostile manner with guards and trumpetts," proclaiming that the East India Company had collapsed, and that he was the accredited agent of a New Company which had taken its place. He was joined by Vincent, and apparently also by Littleton, a former servant of the Company. They repaired to the Dutch quarter, and there armed a body of "Portuguez, Rashbootes [Rajputs], and Peones," with which they easily overpowered all opposition. They then obtained from the native authorities permission to trade in the name of the fictitious New Company, and proceeded to build factories and commence business. The unfortunate Hedges, arriving in July, 1682, found Pitt in complete possession of Balasore and Hugli, and the Company's trade at a standstill. He attempted to retaliate with a feeble threat of Chancery proceedings. "Vincent and Littleton," we are told, "are served with subpoenas out of Chancery, which they slight, and a day being appointed for their answer, they refused, saying they would answer in England."

By the end of 1682, however, Sir Josiah Child had become Governor of the Company, and, with the help of his brother John, who was President at Surat, he set to work in deadly earnest to suppress the Interlopers. In 1683 larger powers of dealing with these offenders were conferred on the Company by Charles II., under which, in spite of the outcry which this grant aroused, Child promptly obtained the arrest of a ship belonging to one Sandys which lay in the Thames with a cargo for the East Indies. A great trial ensued, resulting in a victory for the Company, which established its right to a monopoly of the East Indian trade. It is curious to note that this decision was a good deal due to the doctrine that, the natives of India being infidels, no British subject could trade with them without a Royal license. Meanwhile Pitt, Vincent, and

another Interloper named Dorell had returned to England. On their arrival they were promptly arrested on account of the "most enormous crimes" perpetrated by them in Bengal, and were only released on their "giving £40,000 each security to answer the King's suit." The decision in the *Sandys* case was given in 1684, after which proceedings for Interloping were taken against Pitt and others, "the issue whereof," says one of the Company's letters, "we have reason to believe will make them sick of that kind of interloping trade." Perhaps it did. Pitt, at any rate—who was fined £1,000—remained quietly in England for the next ten years. But he must have found his Interloping profitable, for he soon began to purchase landed estate, and in 1689 became member for Salisbury. In the following year he purchased Stratford under the Castle, or Old Sarum, from the fourth Earl of Salisbury, for which he several times sat in Parliament. It was one of the rottenest of the rotten boroughs abolished in 1832, and, though it apparently contained a mere handful of electors, or none at all, it returned two members.

Meanwhile things were not going too well for the Company. In 1683 Bantam, its last post in the Spice Islands, finally succumbed to the Dutch; Charnock's expedition against the Nawab of Bengal failed miserably in 1687; in 1689 the French fortified Pondicherry and began to assume a hostile attitude towards the English. Again, the Revolution of 1689 was a serious blow to the Company, whose proclivities were Tory, and its enemies at home began to clamour for its destruction; while, to crown these misfortunes, came the ignominious surrender in 1690 of the Company's forces at Bombay to the Mogul.

Moreover, it was gradually being forced upon the Directors of the Company that they were not particularly well served by their own officials in the East, and that, in spite of the advantages which the Company enjoyed, the Interlopers were getting the cream of the trade. A letter of October 3, 1684, from the Court of Directors to the Hugli Council points out that though the Company's

Councils are always on the spot and have the most favourable facilities for trading, they do not make the most of them. Whereas the Interlopers "come to the Bay but for a short time and as it were by stealth, and yet they bring home more in proportion of those new desirable goods by far than our own ships, which is such an unanswerable reproach to those who managed our affairs formerly that we hope you will remove it from your doors." Under these circumstances they seem to have concluded that it might be well to enlist Pitt's abilities on their own side, and they began to make overtures of conciliation. Pitt, as we have seen, had been fined £1,000. This fine the King made over to the Company, and it appears from an entry of November 30, 1687, in the Company's Court Book that "The Court, notwithstanding all the damage the Company have sustained from the said Tho: Pitts and his adherents, were pleased to be so kind to him as to abate him 600£ of the said fyne, and only to receive 400£, which was paid into the Company's Treasury." Nor did their politic kindness stop here; for on November 23, 1688, it is recorded that "Mr. Thomas Pitts was now admitted into the freedom of the Company gratis," and on January 7, 1690, an order was made for redelivery to him of three bales of goods which the Company had apparently seized.

Pitt no doubt accepted these favours for what they were worth, but he was not the man to let sentiment stand in the way of business, and he probably had a shrewd idea of the motives which inspired them. The Company was in deep disfavour with the public, and its Tory sympathies were naturally not too acceptable at the Court of William III. Pitt may well have perceived that the storm was about to burst, or for reasons now unknown he may have decided that the time was ripe for him once more. Be this as it may, in March, 1693, he suddenly emerged from his ten years' repose, and dashed off to India on an Interloping expedition. The Company tried to stop him, but unsuccessfully, and it was reduced to the old lame expedient of sending out orders for his apprehension.

Sir John Goldsborough, the Company's Commissary-General in India, after vainly attempting to effect his arrest, sent him, on November 1, 1693, a fiery ultimatum, requiring him to show his authority to trade, on pain of being dealt with as an Interloper or pirate. Pitt, however, was not easy to browbeat, and he treated the ultimatum with disdain. Goldsborough himself died a week or two later, and his successor Eyres found himself quite unable to cope with the Interlopers. He writes plaintively to Sir John Gaye at Bombay of April 16, 1694: "Notwithstanding all our endeavours with the Nabob and Duân to frustrate and oppose the Interlopers in their designs, they are rather countenanced and encouraged by the whole country in generall."

But the Company was now engaged in a life and death struggle at home. Papillon had reorganised his forces for a fresh attack; the dislike felt to the Company had penetrated into Parliament, and in October, 1691, a resolution striking at its monopoly was passed by the House of Commons. Nothing came of this, but in the following year the Commons presented an address to King William which prayed that the Company might be dissolved and a charter granted to a new company upon such terms as the King might think fit. In November, 1692, the King replied that, after consulting his advisers, he had decided that it would be impossible to dissolve the Company without three years' notice. He suggested, however, that the Company's capital should be increased from £740,000 to £2,000,000, so as to give its opponents the opportunity of becoming members. Sir Josiah Child refused to listen to this, whereupon the indignant Commons petitioned the King to serve the Company with a three years' notice of dissolution. The position was critical, but Child rose to the occasion, and met the attack by applying for a new charter. By dint of bribing right and left, through the agency of Sir Thomas Cooke, he actually obtained a charter for twenty-one years, though he was obliged to consent to an increase of capital, so as to admit the rival merchants. But these were not now to be satisfied so easily, and they began



to deny the right of the Crown to grant a monopoly, which they asserted could only be conferred by Act of Parliament. An appeal was made to the Privy Council, but again the jingling of the guinea was effectual, and a decision was given in favour of the Company. Flushed with this success, Child and the Court of Directors imprudently pushed their new powers too far, and, under an order of detention from the Privy Council, seized a ship called the *Redbridge* which was lying in the Thames with a cargo for the East. A howl of execration arose from the country, and the matter was referred to a Parliamentary Committee, of which Papillon was chairman. The Committee found that the detention of the *Redbridge* was illegal, and the House, in confirmation of this finding, passed a resolution on January 19, 1694, that "all subjects of England had equal right to trade with India and the East unless prohibited by Act of Parliament." Theoretically this resolution was the death-knell of the Company; but though its powers were curtailed it practically retained control of the trade in the East. Moreover, it had already come to terms with Pitt and the more important Interlopers, and Pitt gradually dropped into the position of confidential agent to the Company. In 1695 he returned to England; but by this time the Directors had fully appreciated his abilities, and accordingly, when General Nathaniel Higginson desired to retire from the Presidentship of Madras, Pitt, on November 26, 1697, was appointed to take his place. His selection by the Committee for that purpose was unanimous, but the appointment was strongly objected to by many of the stockholders, including Sir Josiah Child, who protested vigorously against "the sending of that roughling immoral man to India." But it was the best day's work done for the Company for many a long year, and the Directors knew it. In a letter to the Council of Bengal of January 26, 1698, notifying Pitt's appointment as President at Fort St. George, the Court significantly advise the Council to "correspond with the Efort on all occasions, and especially in what may relate to the defeating of Interlopers, wherein we

think our President's advice may be helpfull to you, he having engaged to Us to signalize himself therein." A most sage counsel ; for what Pitt did not know about Interloping was not worth knowing. His appointment was for five years at a salary of £300 a year. He arrived at Madras, accompanied by his eldest son Robert, on July 7, 1698, and took over the reins of office from Higginson—just in time.

For at home another blow had fallen upon the Company. Its rivals—"the Dowgate Merchants," as they came to be called—continued their attacks relentlessly. The discovery that the Company, during the struggle in 1693, had spent £80,000 in bribery in very high quarters inflamed the popular resentment, to which the riots in 1697 of the weavers, who complained that their trade was being ruined by the silks of the East, gave an ominous expression. The Company fought to the last, but in vain, and on July 5, 1698 (two days before Pitt had landed at Madras), the Dowgate Merchants obtained an Act giving them, as a new Company, the exclusive right of trading with India. The old Company's rights were, however, preserved till September 29, 1701, after which date the two companies were to be amalgamated.

The Dowgate party thus at last achieved their aim, but they paid a stiff price for it. The war with France which ended with the peace of Ryswick had produced a financial crisis. The Government was sorely pressed for funds, and the Old Company promptly offered them £700,000 at 4 per cent. on the terms of receiving a statutory charter and an exclusive monopoly of the Indian trade. It was a bold move, but the Dowgate Merchants were bolder still. They offered £2,000,000 at 8 per cent. for similar rights. The Government closed with this offer, and the New Company obtained its Act. One last stroke, however, was made by the Old Company. The subscription lists were opened on July 14, 1698, and on the 16th the whole £2,000,000 had been subscribed. But when the lists came to be examined it was found that £315,000 of this had been subscribed by John du Bois, the treasurer of the Old

Company, which in this way became the chief stockholder in the new concern.

The New Company, in the first flush of its success, despatched three Presidents to manage its affairs in India, and obtained for these the titles of "King's Consuls." Waite, an unspeakable scoundrel, was the new President for Surat, Littleton for Hugli, and John Pitt, first cousin once removed to Thomas, for Masulipatam. He had formerly been in the service of the Old Company; the other two Presidents had been dismissed from it. Thomas Pitt, as we have seen, reached Madras in 1698; and in July of the following year John Pitt appeared upon the scene. He was a foolish braggart, and in no way fit to measure swords with his masterful cousin. Having arrived off Madras, swelling with his own importance, he sent a message ashore requiring Thomas to salute him as the King's Consul by lowering his flag. He seems to have had some misgivings as to the result of this demand, for he had written on July 26, 1698, to Elihu Yale, an old President of Madras: "I bear the charecter of his Majesties Consull for the English nation Generall upon the coast of Coromandell, which will be a cheque upon your Government that they dare not affront it, if they don't pay it that respect which becomes them. I have wrote to my Kinsman the President, but can't tell how he'l relish it before I have his answer."

Pitt speedily solved his cousin's doubts on this point by the following letter:—

"FORT ST. GEORGE,  
"July 28, '99.

"S<sup>r</sup>,—I received yours, the purport of which seems very odd, as well as the superscription. If you had read the Act of Parliament, and well consider'd it, you will find that it establishes my masters in all their rights and privileges in these parts till 1701, and afterwards 'tis secured to them by their subscription, therefore you can have noe power in any place of their settlements, nor shall I own any till I am soe ordered by those that intrust me. I am not unacquainted with what respect is due to the King's

Consull (whether you are one I know not) ; but you cannot think or ever have heard that an ancient fortification wearing the King's Flagg shou'd lower it and salute a real consull ; but I take it to be your obligation to have saluted the Flagg ashore at your coming to anchor, which we shou'd have answer'd according to custome and good manners. What liquors [letters ?] you have for me I desire you to send on shore in these boats. You must expect to find me noe less zealous for my masters' interest then you are for yours, and as you act the same will be return'd you by

“ Sr, your affection<sup>e</sup> kinsman and humble servant,  
 “ THOS. PITT, Governour.”

Then as a postscript : “ Sr., I find you are a young consull by the purport and superscription of your letter. I wish you had omitted it.”

John Pitt was furious, and replied : “ I am sorry to find the zeal for your Masters has transported you beyond sence and good manners. I shall impute it in part to the heat of the country which has alter'd your temper. The young consull, as you term him, gives you this advice to mind the main chance and not forfeit old Saram &ca., and expose yourself to the world to boot ; who I doe assure you will much censure and blaim this rashness of yours, and let me tell you your Masters will neither thank you and bear you out in't. I came later from England than your advices.—J. P., July 28, '99.”

In another letter of about the same date he writes : “ I shall answer your scurrilous letter from Metchelpatam, and beleive me you'l wish you had never wrote in such a stile. I'll take such measures to make you sencible that my commission reaches over all your settlements, and you yourselfe shall be forc't to own and publish it in all your Forts and Settlements, and beg pardon for the affront offer'd to the charecter of his Majesties Consull. I shall send your letters from Masulipatam, and doe not question a just accompt from you of my private affairs. You'l know in the end I am not to be taught my duty by you.—J. P., July 28, '99.”

Foiled in his attempt to overawe Thomas Pitt, the new consul tried the same tactics on Lovell, the Old Company's agent at Masulipatam, who was summoned at his peril to appear and hear John Pitt read his own commission. This silly threat was also ignored, but it called forth a vigorous counter-proclamation from Fort St. George requiring all Englishmen in the Old Company's service "not to obey nor regard any summons or orders that they shall receive from Mr. John Pitt or any one else under pretence of his being a President for the New Company or a Consull."

The other Presidents of the New Company seem to have adopted a similar overbearing attitude, to which Pitt always opposed a sturdy resistance. Thus he writes to Sir Nicholas Waite at Surat on May 20, 1700: "S<sup>r</sup>, I received yours of the 4th of Aprill with the enclos'd letters, and can but smile att your superscription. Tho' you never knew me fond of titles, yet allways thought I was at least equall with any of the New Company's servants, and above the employ of a Consull. I have been throughly informed of your behaviour towards our Masters' servants, and what I most wonder att is that they did not do themselves justice upon you with their own hands. For my part, without direct orders from the King or from our Company I will have noe regard to your powers, nor your persons, otherwise then as you shall deserve by your deportment. I perceive you would use your fellow-subjects as some did in Oliver's days, for which afterwards they justly and severely suffer'd, and there is great probability that yours may be the same fate. I wish you as much health and prosperity as you doe me."

But though their high-minded proceedings were extremely annoying to the Old Company, they proved rather advantageous to its general prospects. For while the arrogance of the new Presidents gave the greatest offence in India, it soon appeared that they had no real power to enforce their extravagant pretensions. Pitt rubs in this distasteful truth in a contemptuous letter to John of November 12, 1699, from Fort St. George. "The fable of the froggs suits your present temper, and the morall and reflexion I hope will

make much impression on you soe as to prevent your having the fate of the frogs. I recommend to you allsoe the reading and practising the fables of the Lion and the Mouse and the Wolf and the Stork. . . . If you pass by here you must behave your selfe very civilly, noe drums, flaggs, nor trumpets within our bounds, for here shall be but one Governour whilst I am here. Your advice is very good, and I returne it to you ; mind your trade which is your Masters' business, and when the Moors \* have bang'd you and stript you of what you have, upon your submission and begging pardon for what you have done, I may chance to protect you here. I can't but laugh at your promising us protection ; when you have neither forces, power nor interest in the countrey. When ours are assign'd you, you may talk at that rate. . . . I have seen your sugar-candy how-doe-you-doe letters to severall, all of which will not doe. . . . I think I have now answered all your riff-raff stuff, which I hope will be as tiresome to you to read as 'tis to me to write."

Indeed, John Pitt was a hopeless failure, and grossly mismanaged the New Company's business. Even a friendly correspondent, one Charles Fleetwood, writes to him on July 30, 1699: "I find our Grandees are strangely nettled here at your (as they call it) strange carage in the road, as likewise at your manner of writeing, which is by them look't upon as an affront of the first rank." Pitt, who had given him some valuable assistance in earlier life, bitterly resented the hostile attitude of his later years, and described him as "one of the haughtiest, proudest, ungratefulest wretches that ever was borne, he forgott all former kindnesses from me, insomuch that he deny'd I ever did him any." His Indian career, however, was not long, as he died at Durrumpaut on May 8, 1703. His widow requested that he might be buried at Madras, "which," says Pitt bluntly, "I did not refuse her, but would pay noe respects to his corps."

Let us turn, however, to some of the lighter details of Pitt's administration. The whole community was of a

\* *I.e.*, native Indians.

rangely patriarchal type, and the Government intervened most ludicrously in the private affairs of its citizens. The Company had imposed a somewhat severe discipline upon its servants in India. In 1668 a code of rules and orders, which came to be known as "The Company's commandments," was printed and sent out to the various settlements. Under these not only were grave misdemeanours dealt with, but penalties were affixed to such offences as the omission of prayer, absence from divine service, and coming in late at night. Pitt fully maintained the spirit of these traditions, and the Consultation Books of Madras show some curious specimens of the paternal authority exercised by him and his council. Thus on July 9, 1698, one Henry Dobyms was summoned before the council for being privately married to Mrs. Michael Baker. The culprit's defence was that he had been married by a Romish priest who had left for Bengal. Being unable, however, to produce a marriage certificate, he was forbidden to live with his wife, and was thrown into prison preparatory to being deported to England. Subsequently he produced two witnesses to the marriage, and was thereupon released from custody, "but what punishment to be inflicted is referred to further consideration." In the administration of the law, strict justice was at times frankly tempered by considerations of expediency, as the following entry in the Consultation Book shows. Friday, 6th November (1702).—It was ordered that the three black fellows apprehended, and found preparing to join Pagodas, should be brought on their trial to-morrow; but finding the evidence against them is so insufficient that they will most certainly be acquitted, and they offering six hundred Pagodas to be acquitted without a trial, it is thought much better to accept the same; not only in regard to the six hundred Pagodas, but likewise their being acquitted on their trial would encourage others to attempt the same; and accordingly it is agreed to receive the said six hundred Pagodas, and banish them the place."

Pitt was at great pains to restore that respect for the Company which the pusillanimous administration of the

home authorities had done so much to weaken. On February 9, 1703, he advised the Directors that "the Moors will never let your trade runn as quietly as formerly till they are well beaten, for the contests here has made 'em put noe small value upon their trade, besides your having suffer'd your servants to be treated after that most ignominious manner at Surat for many years past, has encourag'd 'em to attempt the like in all your settlements, and I hear in Bengall that they chawbuck English men in their publick Durbars, which formerly they never presum'd to doe, and the Junkaneers [tax-collectors] all over the countrey are very insolent, only those within our reach I keep in pretty good order, by now and then giving 'em a good banging."

He seems also to have taken a paternal interest in the love affairs of his subjects. The following remarkable letter from one John Haynes to Pitt tells its own story\*:—

"April 14th, 1701.—Yours of the 11th instant I received, whereby I find my expectations of the widdow wholly frustrated, which is a great affliction hard to beare, but that my eavil stars of late years have been predominant, which have accustomed me to frequent disappointments; therefore hope and believe this will not quite break my hart; though to misse a rich widdow, tolararblie handsome and not verry old, is in my opinion a much greater misfortune than to lose halfe a dousen other mistresses, though in the prime of youth and beauty (if without money); which some, whither wise or otherwise, have run mad for the loss of. I find there is no coming in for a rich widdow in Maddaras without securing the reversion some years before their husband's death, therefore thinke had best bespeake the present widdow against her becoming soe a second time, thereby to anticipate other pretenders. Soe much for widdows at present, having but to return your Honour thankses for your kind offer of assistance had there been hopes of succeeding, which could not be expected against the current of a woman's inclinations,

\* Fortescue MSS. Hist. MSS. Commission, 13th Rep. Appendix. Part iii. p. 4.



which seldom move progressively, but are hurried on more violently than a rapid torrent."

Pitt apparently tried to console him with the hopes of a certain Mrs. Middleton, and the astute Mr. Haynes tried to make a deal for himself.

"In the postscript you are pleased to commend one Mrs. Middleton for a pritty woman, and who, you believe, will make an excellent wife. I cannot doubt but your experienced judgment therein must be as stanch as in other more weightie affairs, and should thinke myself extreamly happy in such a wife, but cannot, in conscience, endeavour to compasse it by making the lady miserable. You well know that the perquisites of a poor drudging booke-keeper will not maintaine that lady as she deserves, but were I thought worthy to have the title Deputy Governor conferred on me by your Honour, should readily become a sutor to the good lady to compleat my happinesse in this worlde." We do not hear what was the end of this romance; but as we find Pitt befriending "two sons of Mr. Haynes" in 1707, we may hope perhaps that the capacious affections which this letter reveals became speedily and suitably mated. In any case the letter throws a curious sidelight on the rapid mortality among the Company's servants in India.

Another letter comes from a lady (Fort. MSS. p. 10), who writes to Pitt that "The gentlemen are pretty civil to me now, but I can attribute that to nothing but your Honour's goodness in making them soe. I now humbly make bold to acquaint your Honour that I have some thoughts of marreing Captain Greenhaugh, if your Honour shall approve of it, but not else. Indeed the only reason that endusees me to it is I formerly made him a kind of promiss, though, after which, with my own free consent, it was quite as I thought broke off by my brother, but he has now again so importunately renued his courtship that I know not how to be rid of him. Another reason is that I may be freed from the courtship of some others in this place, which I think wod be but as indifferent matches as the other. Could I have got

home to England I woud not have staid here for the best husband in India."

Confidences like these are the more peculiar from the fact that Pitt always expressed himself opposed to matrimony.

He found on his accession to office that the Old Company's affairs in Madras were in considerable disorder, and he set to work at once to restore them. One of his earliest reports to the Directors ends with a "hope that what has been done amiss by our predecissors will be amended in ourselves; and that what time has been spent in quarrelling and ruining one another will be spent in improving your revenues, lessening your charges, and sending of you full ships in season."

But while pushing his internal reforms he was harassed by enemies from without. Daud Khan, who had been appointed Nawab of the Carnatic in 1701 by Aurangzeb, looked upon the Madras Presidency as a milch-cow from which copious supplies might be drawn. Upon his appointment the Madras Council sent an embassy with presents, requesting the confirmation of the Company's trading privileges and the removal of certain abuses and grievances. Daud Khan returned most of the presents with an intimation that they were insufficient. Pitt smelt a rat, but refused to be bullied into giving more, and began immediately to put Fort St. George into a state of defence. A protest also against the Nawab's proceedings was sent to the Mogul's Grand Vizier at Delhi. In July, 1701, Daud Khan arrived with a considerable force at the neighbouring Portuguese settlement of St. Thomé, but Pitt replied to this move with such vigorous preparations that his opponent fell back once more on negotiations, and on the 8th of July intimated that he would now accept the original presents. These were sent to him, but he still did not withdraw his forces. "This sudden alteration happening," writes Pitt, "makes us fear a snake in the grass, and resolve that we will not disband any of our forces till his army marches." On the 11th of July Daud Khan expressed a desire to dine with Pitt, to which the latter replied that he would be pleased to receive him, but with a hundred horse only. There was a

great banquet on the 12th of July, followed by further presents, consisting largely of spirits. The Nawab, who was evidently trying to spy out the nature of the Company's preparations, next asked to inspect their ships. It was not easy to refuse this request, and it was accordingly arranged that he should inspect them on the following day. But here Pitt's politic gift of liquor came to the rescue, and when the time arrived the Nawab was too drunk to move. Then he sent word that he would visit the Company's garden. Pitt was exceedingly unwilling to permit this, as it would reveal the weakest part of his fortifications. Daud Khan, however, insisted, and set out with a considerable body of troops. But once more the situation was saved by the bottle, for he got no further than a Portuguese chapel, where he fell into a drunken sleep. On the 17th of July he withdrew his troops; but this was only a temporary respite, and in January, 1702, he reappeared at St. Thomé in force. After a time Pitt made some diplomatic inquiries as to the meaning of this visit. The reply was that the Nawab was expecting "some Englishmen to come to him, and that, too, not without a present." This broke down the patience of Pitt's council, and they replied flatly that they would submit no longer to this kind of extortion. They pointed out that, while the Company raised no revenue except out of its own people, it supported at least 200,000 of the Mogul's subjects, "and that rather than be subjected to such frequent presents, it would be more to the Company's advantage that the King gave us some years to get in our effects, and then demolish our settlement and quit the country." Upon this Daud Khan threw off the mask and proceeded to blockade Madras, alleging as a reason that, as the English had failed in their undertaking (a foolish undertaking given by Waite at Surat a few years previously) to suppress piracy, the Mogul had ordered their trade to be stopped. Pitt's position was one of extreme difficulty; he was not strong enough to take the offensive, and could only endeavour to protect the Company's property from the plundering of the Nawab's troops. Oddly enough, soon after the siege began we hear of a present of "forty-eight

China oranges" being sent by Pitt to the Nawab. The latter then proposed—of course for a consideration—to intercede with the Mogul for the English, but Pitt would have none of it. Further attempts were made to extort money, but Pitt replied stoutly that "we owed them nothing, their King nor his country, nor would we give them anything." Then followed another present of oranges. At last, in March, 1702, news reached Madras that the claims of the Mogul against the English in reference to the piracy question had been settled by a payment of £282,000 in money and goods. Pitt thereupon demanded that the siege should be raised. The Nawab, however, replied that he had other claims against the English, and declined to move. More oranges were sent him, but these were returned with an answer that they were only fit for children. The Nawab, however, was beginning to realise that Pitt was rather a hard nut to crack, and gradually moderated his terms. Pitt on his part was most anxious to have the blockade raised, not only because the trade of Madras was being ruined, but also because the French and the Dutch were beginning to be troublesome. So finally it was arranged in May, 1702, that, on the Company paying 20,000 rupees to the Nawab and 5,000 rupees to the Dewan (the Revenue officer), the Nawab would raise the siege, restore all the Company's property which had been taken, and pay damages.

Meanwhile troubles were thickening fast round the New Company. Lack of capital, lack of experience, and the mismanagement of its Eastern officials soon piled up a load of difficulties. Proposals for amalgamation were made to the Old Company, but they proved abortive, for the latter had a good deal of life left in it, and was not at all inclined to shoulder the misfortunes of its unsuccessful rival. Moreover, in April, 1700, it had, after considerable persistence, obtained an Act continuing its existence as a Corporation, and was thereby enabled to trade still on the £315,000 of the New Company's stock which it had subscribed. Practically, therefore, though it had lost its monopoly, it was still in a position to carry on its trade with the East. But at last the wasteful and ruinous rivalry between the two Com-

panies became so serious a national danger that William III. intervened, and put pressure on the Old Company to effect an amalgamation. Protracted negotiations followed, and finally, in April, 1702, seven weeks after the King's death, a scheme of amalgamation was arranged. The principal points were that a committee of twenty-four managers, twelve from each Company, should be chosen to control the business of the two Companies abroad. All business commenced by either Company was to be completed by it in the course of the next seven years; and at the expiration of this period the two were to be merged in one joint-stock company to be called "The United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies." In fact, however, the rivalry between the Companies was too strong to permit this nominal fusion to be effective. A smouldering hostility continued to exist between them till 1708, when a demand was made upon them by the Government for £1,200,000. Common danger then brought about a union which common interests had been powerless to effect. Their differences were submitted to Lord Godolphin for arbitration, and under his scheme the two companies at last became really one.

For the moment, however, all was harmony, in England at any rate, and the stocks of the two Companies rose briskly in price. Superficially the outlook was not unpromising. Pitt, in spite of all difficulties, had greatly improved the position and pushed the business (sometimes at his own expense) of the Old Company, and the letters of the Court at this time are loud in his praise. Thus on January 17, 1701, the Directors write: "We are now come to the last part of yours, containing your assurance of firm adhering to our interests. We are convinced of it to the last degree, and on our part give you our thanks for the zeal, courage, and fidelity you have shown, and do assure you that we hold ourselves obliged to take such care of you as to render you safe from any of those consequences our enemies vainly threaten you withall." Pitt was much gratified by this tribute from the Court, and writes to Sir Stephen Evance on

October 15, 1701: "I am very glad if what I have done here is to my Masters' satisfaction, and their bare thanks to me is of far greater value than a Baronetship."

Indeed, his abilities were so conspicuous that even the New Company was at last fain to avail itself of them. The Committee of twenty-four was at last duly elected in July, 1702, and after some discussion, Pitt was unanimously elected President or Chairman of it, John Pitt being only given the second place, with a promise of succession to the Presidentship. Pitt's letter (October 3, 1702) to the New Company on his appointment was very characteristic of him: "'Twas my fate and nott my choice that made mee your Enemy, and since you and my Masters are united, itt shall be my utmost Endeavours to purchase your Good opinion and deserve your Friendship. The bearer is my son, whome I recommend to your favour." This son was Robert, who left India altogether, in the *Loyall Cooke*, on October 9, 1702, secretly taking with him Pitt's "grand affair," as he used to call it—the famous Pitt diamond. He may almost be said to have carried Pitt's heart with him too; for from this time, without neglecting his duties in India, Pitt's chief interest was centred in this gem, and he was ever fretting to get home and look after it. But his release was not to come yet, and indeed there was plenty for him to do. He was now to some extent saddled with the care of the New Company's affairs, which had been brought to a desperate condition by the incompetence of John Pitt and the villainies of Littleton and Waite. Nor did he altogether approve of the policy of the Old Company. He condemned their practice of vesting all power in the councils, as paralysing effective administration; and he points out that, as all the Company's business transactions were with absolute monarchs, the power of dealing with these should be lodged in a single plenipotentiary. There is something to be said for this view, but it is not difficult to recognise Pitt the man behind Pitt the adviser. Moreover, the outlook in the East was threatening. India was seething with the internal dissensions which a few years later broke

into open revolution on the death of Aurungzeb. Many of his subordinates, too, were incompetent, and he complains bitterly that "the old Company lost ten times as much by employing fools as they did by knaves." He evidently practised what he preached in this respect, for he remarks: "Honesty and ability are certainly the only qualifications that should recommend persons to your service, but if I was under the necessity to take a servant that wanted either of 'em, it should be the former; for I could call him to an account, and oblige him to satisfaction; but fools that want ability can give none. For my particular affairs I employ the cursedest villain that ever was in the world, and see him cheat me before my face; but then he is a most dextrous indefatigable fellow in business, which makes me such amends that I can afford to bear with it."

Again, many of the Company's employés were turbulent and unruly, and required to be kept sternly in hand. Pitt, who stood no nonsense from anybody, did not hesitate on occasion to take a stick to them, observing in one of his letters to the Court that the lack of corporal punishment has been the "ruine of many a youth in this place." Even at the Company's table the manners were of the roughest. Quarrels and blows were not uncommon, and one enthusiast distinguished himself by sending for the cook to the general table, "and there beating him till he bled like a pig." The bad times seem also to have affected Pitt's private fortune, and in several of his letters he laments that he will require an extension of his appointment to make good his losses.

Naturally, in his position he was pestered with applications from people in England to find places for their friends, sometimes on the slenderest grounds. One correspondent, a certain Wadham Wyndham, after informing Pitt that he is the "father of a shee child, but it may turne to a boy," proceeds: "You may receive this from the hands of Mrs. Anne Miller, who goes to your parts to make her fortune; her father is a Vyntner and an honest man, but has many chirildren and lives in Wood Street. I have noe knowledge my Self of her, but my wife's midwife did

desire this favour of mee, and I wish her good success and pray excuse my troubling you." More interesting is an application from William Hewer, Samuel Pepys's factotum, on behalf of a Mr. Edward Harrison, who afterwards became Governor of Fort St. George, and was the father of the famous Lady Townshend (see p. 145).

Pitt also had some religious difficulties to deal with. The Roman Catholic bishops of St. Thomé claimed a sort of spiritual jurisdiction over their co-religionists in Madras. One of these bishops, Don Gaspar Alfonso, had sent an order to the Padres of Madras requiring the delivery of certain papers on pain of excommunication. Pitt and his council met these pretensions with a proclamation that "in order to publish these our highest resentments against the Right Reverend Don Gaspar Alfonso's proceedings and the Reverend Padre Anjou's compliance with the same, we hereby declare that no bishop whatever of the Roman Catholic religion hath any power or jurisdiction over the clergy or laymen of that persuasion residing under this our government."

A still more serious matter was the quarrel which broke out in 1707 between the religious factions known as the Right and Left Hand Castes. Owing to the bitter hostility between these castes, separate parts of the town were allotted to them respectively, and the quarrel arose by reason of a Left Hand Caste wedding passing through the Right Hand Caste quarter. Pitt's strenuous efforts to settle the dispute were unavailing, and the bulk of the Right Hand Caste left Fort St. George for St. Thomé. Pitt accused one of his council, Fraser, of conspiring with the malcontents, caused him to be suspended from office, threw him into prison, and threatened to hang him. The absence of the fugitives was highly inconvenient to Fort St. George, where their services were required as workmen; and when after a delay of some weeks they still refused to return, Pitt, in a burst of indignation, proposed to attack St. Thomé and put as many as possible of them to the sword. Preparations were actually made for this, but fortunately wiser counsels prevailed, and shortly afterwards



the native Governor of St. Thomé succeeded in bringing about the return of the deserters. The true history of these troubles is somewhat obscure. It is reasonably clear that Fraser had assisted the Right Hand Caste in their revolt, but Pitt, on the other hand, appears to have shown special favour to the Left. It also seems probable that commercial considerations entered largely into the difficulty, and that neither Pitt nor Fraser was wholly disinterested in their respective championships.

The quarrel, however, had important consequences for Pitt. In spite of his valuable services, the Directors of the Old Company had become rather restive under his dictatorial procedure. Moreover, though the New Company was glad enough of his help in its difficulties, its Directors had never really forgiven him for his successful opposition, and by degrees, under the lead of Sir Gilbert Heathcote, a strong party hostile to him arose on the Board. Charles du Bois and others begged him to conciliate these opponents; but conciliation was not much in Pitt's line, and in July, 1707, we find Edward Harrison writing to warn him that Heathcote is his mortal enemy. Pitt's chief support came naturally from the Old Company, but even in this quarter his friends began to fall away. His son Robert writes in January, 1708, telling him that his old friend Dolben has turned against him, and that the New Company will certainly do him all the harm it can. From abroad, Frederick, one of Pitt's own council, strove without ceasing to undermine his position with the Old Company, while Gough and Bradyll were "indefatigable in spiriting up the New Company" against him, even urging that his person and property should be seized. The hostility thus aroused became aggravated by a financial transaction of Pitt's which certainly was open to criticism. John Pitt's mismanagement of the New Company's affairs at Masulipatam had left it heavily indebted to the native merchants, who after his death came to Madras and clamoured for payment. The situation was critical, for the New Company had neither cash nor credit, and Tillard, its Governor at Fort St. David, in order to meet these

claims, was obliged to raise money by bills drawn on the New Company on usurious terms. Pitt seems to have assisted him in this operation, and then to have bought the bills largely as a speculation. It is clear from a letter of his of February 5, 1705, that he was not quite comfortable about the transaction himself, and his doubts proved sound. For when the bills fell due in 1706 the Directors of the New Company declared the whole transaction improper and refused to honour them. Pitt insisted fiercely on his rights, flatly charged the Directors with having themselves engaged in similar speculations, and asked scornfully, "So then are your Bonds so sacred as not to be bought or sold, or of so little value that we should not have regarded them?" After this it is delicious to find Pitt writing with a sublime unconsciousness to Robert: "I hear the New Company are strangely irritated at my letters." Ultimately the bills were paid with an abatement.

Thus, by 1709, the opposition to Pitt had become formidable, and his high-handed conduct during the caste disturbances gave his enemies the opportunity which they had long been seeking. Moreover, their path was made easier by the fact that he himself had several times applied for permission to resign. Accordingly, on receiving the council's report on the riots, the Directors of the Old Company, on February 4, 1709, sent a frigid letter of reprimand, expressing an opinion that the riots might have been prevented by better management on the part of the President and council, while they declined altogether to entertain the charges against Fraser, whom they reinstated in his position. This was a slap in the face for Pitt, but more was to follow. For this letter to the council was accompanied by another to himself personally, politely relieving him of his post. This letter arrived on September 17, 1709. Pitt felt his dismissal rather bitterly, and writes to Robert on September 21, 1709: "On the 17th in the night arrived the *Heathcot*, which brought me as true a relish of the Managers' gratitude as I have had of their justice." But he lost no time in

handing over his office to his successor, Addison (brother of the essayist), and left India for ever about October 25, 1709.

And now at last he was free to devote his attention to his "grand affair." Pitt first heard of it in the summer of 1701, and on November 6 in the same year he sent a model of it to England for Sir Stephen Evance's inspection. Evance rather discouraged the purchase, on the ground that the only purchaser would be some monarch, and that owing to the European war "there is no Prince can buy itt." Pitt, however, stuck to his own opinion, and ultimately purchased the stone under the circumstances mentioned later. He calculated that when cut it would weigh about 300 carats and be worth £450,000, which he declared was "as cheap as neck beef." Some monarch he thought would be "the fairest chapman" for it; and he would prefer that "it were purchased for the crown of England, provided they will come up to the value of it." Perhaps for the English crown he would make some abatement; but under no circumstances is it to be sold "to a club of people that shall make more advantage of it than myselfe, who have run the greatest of risgoes to purchase it." In 1703 these "risgoes" began to take a tangible form. Rumours of its sale had reached the Mogul, who commenced investigating the matter. Pitt does not seem to have been implicated in these inquiries, but ugly stories began to circulate as to how the stone had been obtained. Shortly before Pitt's departure from India, Captain Seaton, one of the Company's officers, had openly charged him "with buying a great diamond to the Company's prejudice." Pitt instantly threw him into prison, and easily persuaded the council to order him to be deported to England, though the order was not carried out. This took place on August 3, 1709, and Pitt, as we have seen, left Madras in the following October. Seaton, however, had spread his story among the natives, and in May, 1710, a formal claim to the diamond was made against the Company on behalf of the Mogul. The Directors were rather disturbed by this, but, as their letters show, they evidently distrusted Seaton's

charge, and pertinently inquired "who they were that first sett on foot the discourse about it, and how it came to pass that when the Dyamond had been in England severall years before, the natives . . . never mentioned anything about it till after the late President was come to England." Apparently the claim was not pressed, as we hear no more about it. One of the prevalent rumours declared that the stone had formed one of the eyes of a statue of Juggernaut in Chandernagore, from which it had been stolen. But, as a writer to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1776 (vol. xvii. p. 64) aptly points out, "a diamond in its native roughness would not have made a more brilliant figure in Jagrenat's head than a piece of alum." A more circumstantial tale was that it had been stolen from the Parkal diamond mines by a slave, who had secreted it in a wound made in his thigh for the purpose; that the slave had been murdered by a sea captain, who subsequently sold the stone to Pitt for £1,000, and then committed suicide. Pope's original lines on Sir Balaam (*Moral Essays*, Ep. iii.) appear to refer to this story:—

Asleep and naked as an Indian lay,  
An honest factor stole the gem away;  
He pledged it to the knight, the knight had wit,  
So robbed the robber and was rich as P——

Mr. Streeter (*The Great Diamonds of the World*, p. 170) thinks that the story may be substantially accurate, with the exception that the diamond was sold by the captain, not to Pitt, but to a native merchant. The persistence of these rumours, however, caused Pitt considerable anxiety, and to refute them he made a full declaration in the most solemn terms of the circumstances of its purchase.

"I do hereby declare and assert," he writes, "under my hand, in the presence of God Almighty, as I hope for salvation through the meritts and intercession of our Saviour Jesus Christ, that this is the truth; and if it bee not, lett God deny it to mee and my children for ever." Shortly his story was as follows. About December, 1701,

Ramchund,\* one of the best-known native merchants, brought the diamond to him at Madras, and asked 200,000 pagodas for it. Pitt would not offer more than 30,000, so the negotiations for the time dropped. In February, 1702, Ramchund came again to Madras, and offered Pitt the diamond for 100,000 pagodas. At a meeting a few weeks later Pitt beat him down to 55,000 pagodas, and raised his own offer to 45,000. Ramchund, however, would not agree to this, and they "tooke a friendly leave of one another," Pitt informing a Mr. Benyon, who was in the house, that the transaction was off. But an hour later Ramchund reappeared, and offered the diamond for 50,000 pagodas. Pitt proposed to split the difference between them, and raised his offer to 47,500 pagodas. Ramchund, after some severe haggling, came down to 48,000, but would go no further, and finally at that price (which, taking the pagoda at 8s. 6d., would be £20,400) Pitt closed with him. Upon this, Pitt says, "He delivered mee the stone, for which I paid him very honourably, as by my books appears. And I here further call God to witnesse that I never used the least threatening word at any of our meetings to induce him to sell it mee, and God Himselfe knows it never was as much as in my thoughts soe to doe." This account of the proceeding was subsequently confirmed by a Mr. Salmon, and there seems no reason to doubt that it was substantially correct. According to modern ideas, such a transaction by a man in Pitt's position might be regarded as a breach of his duty to the Company. But it is clear that the Company raised no objection on this ground, their only fear being that Pitt's purchase might bring them into collision with the native authorities.

It is quite likely, however, that the diamond was originally stolen, and, as Mr. Streeter points out, the enormous reduction in price to which Ramchund submitted looks as if he knew that the title was not beyond suspicion. But if Pitt

\* The name is given variously by different authors as Ramchund, Daurchund, and Damchund. I have here followed the Fortescue MS. The date, however, must have been earlier than December, 1701, as Pitt had sent a model of the diamond to Evance on November 6, 1701 (see p. 73).

deserved the bargain for which he worked so hard, he paid dearly for it in anxiety. Never was man more tormented by a treasure. His letters on the subject from India are harrowed by his fears. He enjoins the closest secrecy on all concerned, and then upbraids Robert, unjustly, for disclosing the secret. He dreads being robbed by the jeweller who cuts it, or even by his own agents. Having originally entrusted it to Robert and Sir Stephen Evance, he subsequently orders them to hand it over to his cousin, George Pitt. About Robert he writes to his friend Dolben: "I am not a little jealous too of my sone, who has already made too bold with me on severall occasions, therefore pray take care now that he does not strip me." Rumours affecting Evance's credit throw him into an agony of alarm. "For God's sake," he writes to Dolben, "prevent any misfortune that may attend me from anything that shall befall Sir Ste." Bitter too is his disappointment and indignation when he finds that the stone has been reduced by cutting from about 410 to a little under 137 carats. In 1706 it was ready for sale—"a glorious sight," as Robert described it—but no purchaser appeared. Pitt grew seriously concerned, his anxiety being increased by the growing fame of the jewel. His movements became uncertain and mysterious, he often went about in disguise, and he redoubled his precautions for the safe keeping of the treasure. At last, in 1717, a purchaser was found, the Duke of Orleans, as Regent during the infancy of Louis XV., agreeing to buy it for the French crown. Pitt, accompanied by his sons Robert and John and his son-in-law, Charles Cholmondeley, carried it over himself to Calais, where it was delivered into the hands of the jeweller appointed to receive it on behalf of the Regent. The price is generally given as £135,000; but this seems to be not quite correct. For Pitt, in a letter to Robert of June 29, 1717 (Fortescue MSS., p. 62) writes: "I cannot help impertinent fools meddling with my business that they had nothing to do with. The stone was sold for 2,000,000 *livres*, sixteen to one pound sterling [=£125,000]. I received the third of the money, and the remainder in four payments, every six months, with

5 per cent. interest; for security of which I have Crown jewels, 4 parcells, one to be delivered at each payment." Besides this, the chips appear to have realised another £8,000; but the cutting was an expensive process, and "licked up," as Robert expressed it, £6,000. Colonel Yule mentions on the authority of Lady Stanhope (in 1889) that "the overplus of the purchase money was never paid, and when it was claimed from the French Government by the children of Governor Pitt, the debt was fully admitted, but it was pronounced impossible to enter into the past transactions of the Regent." Consequently, as he adds, "the price really received by Pitt must have depended on the value of the three [actually four] boxes of jewels pledged as security, respecting which there seems no evidence forthcoming."

The diamond, which received the name of the *Regent*, went through various vicissitudes during the stormy days which befell France at the end of the eighteenth century. In 1791 it was officially valued at 12,000,000 livres, or £750,000. In 1792 it was stolen from the *Garde-Meuble*, but was discovered more than a year later, according to Yule, in a cabaret of the Faubourg St. Germain, according to Streeter, in a ditch in the Allée des Veuves, Champs-Élysées. In 1796 it is said to have been pledged to some German bankers, redeemed, and brought back to Paris in 1797. In 1798 it was again pawned to one Vanderbeg, a banker of Amsterdam, who is said to have secreted it in his wife's stays. It was redeemed by Napoleon in 1802, and set in the pommel of his sword at his Coronation in 1804. It is now securely hidden somewhere in the Palace of the Louvre, while a paste model of it only is exhibited to the public.

The *Regent's* weight when cut is variously given as 128 and 136 carats, but even at the higher figure it has been completely eclipsed by the Cullinan diamond lately presented to the King. This giant stone was divided into two pieces of 1,700 and 1,000 carats respectively. The smaller of these has been cut into a circular brilliant weighing 330 carats, while the larger has been, or is being, made into a pendant.

In addition to his other cares and anxieties Pitt was sadly harassed by domestic troubles. His wife was reckless and extravagant, and so mismanaged his affairs that he wrote in exasperation to Evance from India: "If she can't live upon the income of my land, let her starve, and all her children with her, therefore pay not one penny that she draws upon you" (September 12, 1704). It seems too that her fidelity was not beyond suspicion. Writing to Robert on September 30, 1706, Pitt exclaims that all his hopes of founding a family have been "blasted by an infamous wife and children." He goes on: "I have heard from others, the truth of which I cannot question, that that scoundrell rascally villain has been too intimate in my family, to the prejudice of my honour and their reputation, for I make no distinction between women that are reputed ill, and such as are actually soe; wherefore I have discarded and renounced your mother for ever, and will never see her more, if I can avoid it." Pitt subsequently separated from his wife and allowed her £300 a year. His children, moreover, quarrelled bitterly among themselves and with their mother. On one occasion Robert turned his mother and sisters out of doors, while they retaliated in kind on one of his children. Pitt writes furiously to Robert on this (September 22, 1706): "What hellish planet is it that influences you all, and causes such unaccountable distraction, that it has published your shame to the world? . . . Have all of you shook hands with shame, that you regard not any of the tyes of Christianity, humanity, consanguinity, duty, good morality, or anything that makes you differ from beasts, but must run from one end of the Kingdome to the other, aspersing one another and aiming at the ruine and destruction of each other?—that you should dare to do such an unnatural and approbrious action as to turne your mother and sisters out of doors?—for which I observe your frivolous reasons, and was astonished to read them: and I no less resint what they did to your child at Stratford. But I see your hand is against every one of them, and every one against you, and your brother William to his last dying minute." Elsewhere the Governor reminds Robert that "Will dyed with com-



plaints in his mouth against you." Nothing seems to be known of this son (who, indeed, does not usually appear in the pedigree of the Pitt family), except that Robert in a letter of January 10, 1707 (Fortescue MSS., p. 25), speaks of him as having died of smallpox in February, 1706. His father subsequently grumbles at the expense of his funeral, remarking grimly, "I should have thought that half the sum charged would have buried all my family."

Robert was a bad son and a bad brother, and a great disappointment to his father. He had good abilities, and the Governor evidently hoped to make a career for him in India. Robert, however, hankered after the fleshpots of fashionable life, and after four years in the East wrung from his father a reluctant permission to return home. Immediately after his return he married Harriet Villiers, daughter of Edward Villiers, eldest son of the third Viscount Grandison. Pitt was unreasonably irritated at this match, which was quite unexceptionable, though the lady's fortune was not large. But Robert soon gave him more solid cause for resentment. Trusting apparently to obtaining some lucrative appointment through his wife's relations, he broke out into an extravagance which soon dissipated the greater part of his fortune, and became rather a querulous pensioner on his father. Nevertheless he neglected his father's affairs while the latter was in India, and was the chief source of the discord which reigned in the family. Moreover, in politics he attached himself to the Jacobite party, to the great indignation of the Governor, who was a stout Hanoverian. At last the post of Clerk of the Green Cloth to the Prince of Wales was obtained for him, with a salary of £500 a year and nominal duties; but for some reason he seems never to have taken it up. Yet he was fond of posing as a highly injured person, and complaining that he was not kept in affluence at the expense of his brothers and sisters. In a letter of January 3, 1708 (Fortescue MSS., p. 33), to his father, he described himself as "the abandoned child of your family, the only one who has no provision of bread made for him, his unfortunate wife and three little children, although in the most need of all." Pitt's reply was just and sensible: "In

my will there is a good provision made for you, your wife and children, who shall never be abandoned by me if they deserve otherwise, and you have no reason to grudge what I have done for your brothers and sisters." Robert died in 1727, and his only claim to remembrance is that he was the father of William, the great Lord Chatham. The boy was a favourite with his grandfather, and we hear of him and some of his "comrogues" being carried off from Eton to visit the old man at Swallowfield. Of Pitt's other children, Thomas seems to have been a spendthrift and rather unsatisfactory; John attained some distinction as a soldier, and became Lieutenant-Governor of Bermuda; but his father speaks of him as careless and good-for-nothing; of William nothing seems to be known. Pitt's two daughters, Essex and Lucy, were well spoken of by their contemporaries, and seem to have been rather sinned against than sinning. There is a naïve letter from Essex to Mrs. Robert Pitt, in which she expresses a maiden disappointment with delightful frankness. "We go to Mr. Bartmansemmer's very ofone, and are very much in his favor. I was in hopes of gitting of him at one time, but, the other day, I was strock dead all at once, for he told me he never desin'd to marry" (October 6, 1713). However, as she consoled herself the following year with Charles Cholmondeley, she seems to have recovered satisfactorily from the shock.

Pitt appears to have dropped a good deal of money in middle life, and the loss oppressed him unduly. Partly with a view to recouping this, and partly to escape from the family troubles, he accepted, in 1716, the Governorship of Jamaica, which had been for many years in a chronic state of disturbance under the Governorship of Lord Archibald Hamilton. Writing to Robert about this on December 4, 1716, he declares that his life has been embittered by the confusion in his family, who, moreover, have cost him upwards of £90,000. He adds, "I have bin at great expences at home, the great diamond unsold, soe in my 64th year of age, I am travelling to retrieve this, and seeke my quiett, and endeavoure to forgett it if I can.

God's will be done. I hope to pass the remainder of my life with more comfort than I have since I came to England." He did not, however, much fancy the job, and asked that, before he started, a report might be made on the state of the island. This request was acceded to; but before the report was made the sale of the diamond put his finances on a better footing, and he never took up the appointment, which, in June, 1717, was conferred on Nicholas Lawes.

Our information as to Pitt's life after his return from India is rather fragmentary, but it suffices to throw some light on his character. Active, enterprising, and business-like, he always knew exactly what he wanted and took prompt steps to obtain it. Immediately before landing in England in 1710 he instructs Robert to provide him with good lodgings, two footmen and a valet, "a neate campagne periwig not too bushy nor too long," and a seat in Parliament. The family seat of Old Sarum was then held by Robert and therefore not available for the Governor. But though his requirements were often extensive, no details were too minute for his supervision. "Settle my accounts with Mr. Jolly, who I believe has not only wronged me, but suffered everyone else to do the same. . . . Keep farmer Brown's money out of his hands till he has adjusted all accounts. See whether the work done by my team is equivalent to two men's wages, provender, and wear and tear. Inquire into the gardener's business. Charge him to raise all manner of trees for planting out. I hope you have a good lock on the door." Such were the instructions he would shower upon the indolent Robert. He had no idea of letting his hard-earned wealth be squandered by his children. "My children must work for their bread or starve," he writes to Robert on September 27, 1706. Again, "Let not my money be spent in vain on them; if it be, I'll pinch 'em hereafter" (in March, 1705). But at heart he was really fond of his children and desired to treat them liberally. "I assure you," he writes to Robert on January 21, 1708, "nothing soe chagrins me as when I have a doubt upon me of the wellfare of my children." He was a

generous and charitable friend, and took a large view of the responsibilities of wealth. "Remember," he writes to Robert (January 21, 1708), "that we are not borne only for ourselves, nor has God Almighty bestowed this plentiful fortune on me to give it only amongst my own children, but also necessitous relations and friends, which I will not fail to doe for His glory and my own comfort and happiness." In business he was a hard bargainer and stuck stubbornly to his rights. In his dispute with the New Company over their bills he declared that he "would rather lose the whole sum than a single day's interest." On one occasion, while he was in India, Robert and Evance charged him with £160 for the interest on a bill which they had drawn on him as his attorneys. Pitt promptly repudiated the whole transaction and sued them both. In 1703 some windfalls of timber on his estate after a storm were claimed by the Dean and Chapter of Sarum. Pitt was up in arms at once, and writes to Robert to fight the case, "though I spend the value of the estate in the defence thereof." He also makes this quaint comment on the claim: "Does the Dean of Sarum think that God Almighty sent that storm for they to make advantage out of others' losses? Houses and barns wanting repair should be made good with the value of those trees. I hear there was a fast ordered for that storm. Sure those gentlemen that design to get by it will make a feast, and be so ungodly as to wish for more such." Robert, however, being advised that the Dean and Chapter were, under the lease, clearly entitled to the timber, compromised the matter by accepting half its value: no bad settlement.

Even in the stormy Indian days Pitt's heart never forgot the woods and meadows of England. In the autumn of 1702 he had just emerged from the siege of Madras, and had been confirmed in his Presidency by the united Companies. But neither the dangers of the war nor the honours of peace could blot out the memory of his home at Old Sarum. And so we find him earnestly enjoining both Robert and one Phillips, who seems to have acted as a sort of bailiff, to look closely after his plantations, and see that his nurseries are well stocked with trees, ready for him to

transplant when he comes. He had a positive passion, too, for laying field to field, and at the time of his death possessed Old Sarum, Boconnoc in Cornwall, Swallowfield in Berkshire, and some nine other estates in different parts of the country. Yet he seems to have made his headquarters in Pall Mall, and perhaps his many business affairs compelled him to live chiefly in London.

Anything in the way of opposition he resented as morally malignant; and when age, anxieties, and failing health began to tell upon him, this trait deepened into a morbid suspicion of everything and everybody. His children, his friends, his servants, all mankind seemed to him to be united in a conspiracy to wrong him. Bastard is "a great villaine"; Willis "a scoundrell blockhead"; Phillips, his old bailiff, is "a cursed and unfaithful steward," who is to be put "into those hands that shall tare him to pieces and call him to an account for all his villanys." "I hear the villains at Swallowfield are making more small arches to the bridge towards the house. Let it be who it would that order it, they shall pay for it by the living God." "The misfortunes that all my sons has brought upon me, whereby you have wronged me of a great many thousands, . . . will very speedily carry my grey hairs to the grave, and I care not how soon it is, for that I am surrounded with all the plagues and troubles of this world" (February 26, 1723). Naturally, under these circumstances he was not easy to approach, being, as one critic tactfully expresses it, "extraordinary humoursome and testy." In March, 1722, he seems to have had a stroke; and though he recovered from this he grew steadily weaker. The end, however, did not come till April 28, 1726, when, after two days' illness, he died at Swallowfield, according to Robert, "of a mixture of appoplexy and palsie." In spite of his fears he died a rich man, for his residuary estate alone amounted to £100,000; and over this his family, in their own pretty way, immediately fell to quarrelling.

His life was a strange medley of success and disappointment; but while his successes were the fruits of his own toil and ability, his disappointments were largely due to

causes beyond his own control. He has been censured for his violent action towards Fraser, but the latter in all probability gave him strong provocation. Pitt, in his early reports to the Board, shows no desire to treat him unfairly, and on one occasion expressly declares that certain censures upon him were unjust. Moreover, Fraser's record was a bad one, for it was his violence and abuse which had driven Pitt's predecessor from his post. But to some extent, no doubt, he was the architect of his own misfortunes. An ambition like his was bound to encounter opposition, which a disposition like his was bound to aggravate. He had in a conspicuous degree the vices of his virtues, and he paid the penalty in full. A more gentle, a more conciliatory character than his would have roused fewer enmities, but would hardly have reached the eminence which hostility is always ready to assail.

Whatever may be thought of some of his methods he was a great and successful administrator, and after his dismissal the Directors soon found cause to regret the loss of his strong hand. In 1711 the Rajah Syrrup Sing had seized two of the Company's officers, and successfully demanded a ransom of 800 pagodas for their release. The Directors, writing to the Madras Council, remark ruefully: "Had the like case happened in the late President's time he would have recover'd them both at a tenth part of the money, or rather the Rajah would not have dared to attempt the surprising of them." Indeed, Pitt won both the respect of the natives and the favour of their rulers. The traditional diplomacy of the Company had been to cajole concessions out of subordinate local rulers. Pitt swept this practice aside and boldly addressed himself to the heads of the Imperial power. Shah Aulum, who, after the defeat and death of his two brothers, had established himself as Aurungzeb's successor on the Mogul throne, held Pitt in high esteem, and not only conferred special privileges on his Company, but gave him an honourable and lucrative sinecure, in the commandership of a troop of Imperial horse. His work, however, speaks for itself and is the best testimony to his greatness. He found Madras struggling

with debt and oppressed by enemies from within and without ; he left it with a revenue of 800,000 pagodas a year, and, as he boasts with honest pride, "the jewell of all European Settlements." He won fame and he won wealth ; but more than this, from somewhat humble antecedents he won a social position rather unusual in an age when the line between the commercial and the landed classes was still sharply marked. Perhaps his extensive purchases of landed property assisted him in this, and his political activity may also have served the same end. And in this connection it is curious to note how many of his descendants were persons of distinction. His son Thomas became Baron Londonderry, his daughter Lucy the Countess of Stanhope. The famous William Pitt, first Earl of Chatham, was his grandson, and among his great-grandsons were the still more famous younger Pitt, Thomas Pitt, first Baron Camelford, and Thomas Cholmondeley, first Baron Delamere. He was a loyal friend, a hard hater, and, according to his lights, a diligent and faithful officer of the Company which he served. He was a zealous supporter of the Church, but the stress of his stormy life can hardly have favoured the growth of deep religious feelings. Yet there are some traces of these too. There was found after his death a paper of short *Admonitions*, written in his own hand and for his own use. Some of these speak eloquently enough of the gentler side of this stern, strong character. Two only need be quoted here : " Learn to suffer " ; " Remember to dye."

## IV. THE WITS

IN its widest sense this title would cover a class multitudinous in number, and with a history extending over more than a century. Speaking broadly, Wits may be said to have come in with the coffee-houses in 1652, and to have finally disappeared (under that name) only in the last years of the eighteenth century. We do not hear much of them, however, till towards the end of the seventeenth century, at which time they appear as a thoroughly democratic community, knowing no more distinctions of persons than the coffee- and chocolate-houses which they frequented. A penny would secure a man's admission into most of these, but, once inside, his position, if he aspired to be a Wit, depended solely on his brains. The talk of the early Wits, however, was more in the nature of intellectual debate than conversational fireworks. Indeed, their strength lay rather in the pen than in the tongue, and they included Prior, Pope, Swift, Gay, Addison, Steele, and most of the literary lights of the age. That there were plenty of aspirants to the rôle we may infer from Swift's preface to *A Tale of a Tub*, wherein he satirically computes "the current number of Wits in this island" to be nine thousand seven hundred and forty-three. "*The Wits*," however, in a more special sense, was a designation restricted to a small and select, though loosely defined, set of men of fashion during the middle and latter half of the eighteenth century. They were all men of parts, though intellectually inferior, as a body, to the best of the earlier Wits and to many of their contemporaries outside the charmed circle. Some of them dabbled in literature, but their productions seldom rose above the level of elegant trifling and their weapon was the tongue rather than the pen. Social position was at least as essential to



them as intellectual ability; they were persons of quality first and Wits afterwards, and their surroundings were those of White's and Almack's rather than those of Wills' or Button's and The Grecian. The earlier Wits, as a rule, had neither fashionable aspirations nor the means of gratifying them. Indeed, their inclinations turned rather in the opposite direction. The trappings of persons of quality were not for them, and just as artistic pretensions nowadays find a congenial expression in

Dank and dubious collars,  
And sad, superfluous hair,

so the would-be Wit of the early eighteenth century was rather inclined to pose as a sloven. Budgell protests vigorously against this affectation in the *Spectator*, and declares that Wits of the better sort were opposed to it (*Spectator*, No. 150). This seems likely enough, for wit was a fashion which ascended to the upper classes rather than descended from them. As coffee-houses spread and multiplied they became centres for the formation and diffusion of opinion, sometimes of rather a turbulent kind; and in the reign of Charles II. an attempt was made to suppress them. But when this attempt failed, politicians bethought themselves of using the forces which they could not quell, and by degrees the literary abilities of the coffee-house Wits were pressed into the service of the various political parties. In this way wit got a rise in the world; and as it acquired a higher social consideration, persons of quality began to affect it, often with the most slender pretensions. The consequences in some ways were peculiar. Wit became a sort of courtesy title which was applied indiscriminately to persons of quality and those who aped them. The fast man about town, who had previously been called a man of fashion, was now described as a man of fashion and wit. Accordingly wit became associated with all the dissolute practices which then pertained to a man of fashion, and thus "a man of wit" often meant little more than a profligate. Steele having commented severely on a peculiarly heartless seduction, a rake is made to protest

that "at this rate there is an end to all the wit and humour in the world" (*Spectator*, No. 182). To the same effect is the declaration of Will Wimble (*Spectator*, No. 530), when he announces his impending marriage, and his intention to mend his ways and abandon his "post of an *homme de ruelle*." He expects to be laughed at, but he cares not, for he has ruffled it in his day with the best of them, or, as he puts it, "I have been as witty as others in my time."

However, towards the middle of the eighteenth century there was a certain intellectual revival among the upper classes, and, perhaps as a concomitant of this, wit became purged of its grosser associations and was restored to something like its true position. Under these conditions The Wits arose, and became a definite feature of good society. Their limits as a body, however, were, as has been said, very loosely defined. The term "wits" still enjoyed a broad usage concurrently with its special restricted sense, and was applied to many men who had no pretensions to belong to the fashionable set. Thus Cumberland speaks of having "lived with Johnson, Garrick, Dodington, Jenyns, and the wits of that period." But of the above mentioned men, Dodington alone would have been recognised as one of The Wits; Garrick was perhaps on the border line, or near it; Johnson and Jenyns were undoubtedly outside it.

Confining our attention to these fashionable Wits, it is often difficult to understand on what their reputation rested. George Selwyn, for instance (1719–91), who was perhaps the best known of them all, seems to our modern ideas to be a gigantic fraud. His *bons mots*, which impressed his contemporaries so favourably, consist largely of lumbering puns and rather uneasy epigrams; yet Walpole treasures them with evident delight. Bruce, a somewhat imaginative traveller, was asked in Selwyn's presence if the Abyssinians had any music. "They have one lyre," he replied. Selwyn whispered to his neighbour, "They have one less since he left their country." When it seemed possible that Lord Foley and his brother—two reckless spendthrifts—would succeed in upsetting their father's will, Selwyn remarked that in such case the new

testament would be more favourable to the Jews than the old. One May-day, being surrounded and pestered by a crowd of young chimney-sweeps, he at length turned, made a low bow, and observed, "I have often heard of the *Majesty* of the People; I presume your highnesses are in Court mourning." He was anxious to see a popular farce called "High Life Below Stairs," being weary, as he said, of seeing low life above stairs. On meeting the beautiful Lady Coventry in a dress covered with large silver spangles, he said to her, "Why, you are change for a guinea." "God's ways," he remarked, "are inscrutable, and yet there is not one, from his Grace of Canterbury to the lowest fisherwoman in St. James's Market, who is not constantly accounting for everything He does." To us, all this seems wit of the most commonplace order, but it sufficed to invest him with quite a formidable reputation. The charming Lady Sarah Bunbury—who, by the way, could write an excellent letter herself—expresses her trepidation in writing to "Mr. Selwyn the Wit" (Jesse, *Selwyn*, ii. 177). In later life this reputation carried him on by its own momentum. He became a centre round which jokes clustered, and Wraxall tells us that many good sayings of which he was guiltless were attributed to him (Wraxall, *Memoirs*, ii. 289). He was expected to be funny before he had opened his lips, and in 1768 even his admirer Horace Walpole had become "convinced that the young men at White's already laugh at George Selwyn's *bons mots* only by tradition" (Walpole to Montagu, April 15, 1768). Something, no doubt, was due to his comical manner. Walpole describes him as uttering some witticism "from the very summit of the whites of his demure eyes," an effect which must have been heightened by his listless and phlegmatic demeanour. An epigram by him on a pair of shoes found on a lady's bed has been preserved in *The New Foundling Hospital of Wit* (vi. 258) :—

Well may suspicion shake its head,  
 Well may Clarissa's spouse be jealous,  
 When the dear wanton takes to bed  
 Her very *shoes*—because they're *fellows*.

His morbid taste for criminals, executions, and violent forms of death has perhaps been exaggerated, and the story of his special expedition to Paris to see Damiens broken on the wheel for his attempt on the life of Louis XV. appears to be untrue. But the tradition of the taste itself is too strong to be entirely discredited. Lord Holland, during his last illness, hearing that Selwyn had called upon him, said to his servant, "The next time Mr. Selwyn calls, show him up. If I am alive I shall be delighted to see him, and if I am dead he will be glad to see me." As a young man he had his full share of good looks, with easy adaptable manners. But his character was not too well balanced, and his eagerness for admiration often led his judgment astray. This seems to be the explanation of the silly and blasphemous freak which brought his Oxford career to an abrupt close. His disposition was amiable and his tastes artistic. He felt a warm affection for his friends and was passionately devoted to children. Indeed, his hysterical attachment to "Mie-Mie," the little daughter of the Marquis Fagniani, sometimes drove him over the verge of the ridiculous. Wraxall sat for one of his pocket boroughs, and seems to have been intimate with him, though Selwyn did not care much about him, and used to speak of him as "Mr. Rascall." We learn, however, from Wraxall that Selwyn had a thorough knowledge of English history, and was, moreover, "master of many curious anecdotes relative to the Houses of Stuart and Brunswick." He had also acquired from his father, who had taken an active part in politics under Sir Robert Walpole, a knowledge of many of the State secrets of George I. and George II. (*Memoirs*, ii. 290). From his own letters we know that, like most men of fashion of his time, he was a gambler. In later life, perhaps on account of his assiduous devotion to the pleasures of society, he acquired a curious waxy whiteness of complexion, which made him resemble a corpse. But the strangest of his peculiarities was his drowsiness. Horace Walpole writes to Bentley (November 20, 1754) that he can tell him no new *bon mot* as "George Selwyn has not



LADY SARAH BUNBURY.



yet waked for the winter." He then proceeds to relate how Selwyn "t'other night, having lost eight hundred pounds at hazard, fell asleep upon the table with near half as much more before him, and slept for three hours, with everybody stamping the box close at his ear."

This drowsiness was a peculiarity which he shared with some others among The Wits. George Bubb Dodington (1691-1762), the "so often re-patrioted and re-prostituted Dodington," as Walpole calls him, used it with great effect to give zest to his witticisms. Cumberland describes a scene between Dodington and the famous Alderman Beckford, and the complete discomfiture of the latter. "Beckford, loud, voluble, self-sufficient, and galled by hits, which he could not parry and probably did not expect, laid himself more and more open in the vehemence of his argument; Dodington, lolling in his chair in perfect apathy and self-command, dozing and even snoring at intervals in his lethargic way, broke out every now and then into such gleams and flashes of wit and irony as, by the contrast of his phlegm with the other's impetuosity, made his humour irresistible, and set the table in a roar" (Cumberland, *Memoirs*, i. 190).

Dodington, however, is an unlovely figure. He was a treacherous snob, with all the worst faults of the wealthy *parvenu*. Fond of vulgar display, he lived at Hammersmith and Eastbury in a style of magnificent bad taste. His bed, which had a canopy of peacock's feathers, stood on a carpet blazing with gold and silver embroidery, but which a closer examination showed to be made up of his old Court dresses. He courted first one political party and then another, in an unblushing pursuit of his own aggrandisement, till, as Walpole observes, he and Prince Frederick of Wales were at last driven into "a necessary connexion, for no party would have anything to do with either" (Walpole, *Mem. Geo. II.*, 87). But he was despised even by his confederate, and the Prince once said of him to his secretary, "That man is reckoned one of the most sensible men in England, yet, with all his parts, I have just nicked him out of

£5,000, which he will never see again." Hanbury Williams describes him as being—

"To no one party, no one man,  
Not to his own self tight;  
For what he voted for at noon,  
He railed against at night."

With extraordinary callousness he committed the history of his intrigues to a Diary, which he left to his kinsman Wyndham to publish. Wyndham carried this out reluctantly, observing that the Diary showed Dodington's political conduct "to have been wholly directed by the base motives of avarice, vanity, and selfishness." His degradation was deepened by the fact that his abilities were really considerable, and must have carried him to success "if he had but preserved the least shadow of steadiness" (Walpole, *Mem. Geo. II.*, 87). Cumberland tells us that "he had an ornamented fancy and a brilliant wit. He was an elegant Latin classic and well versed in history, ancient and modern." But even his wit was not always genuine, and he kept a book of jokes, out of which he used to refresh his memory when he expected to meet clever company (*Memoirs*, i. 194). Still, the man's native ability rose superior even to this paralysing expedient, and Walpole, no friendly critic, declares that Lord Hervey and Dodington were the only two men he ever knew "who were always aiming at wit, and yet generally found it" (Walpole to Mann, June 3, 1784). He finally attained the peerage which was the object of his ambition, being made Lord Melcombe in 1761; and Cumberland surprised him practising attitudes in his new robes on the day before the Coronation of George III. Lord Chesterfield said of him, "He is a coxcomb superior to his parts, though his parts are superior to almost anybody's. . . . Common Coxcombs hope to impose upon others, more than they impose upon themselves; Dodington is sincere, nay, moderate; for he thinks still ten times better of himself than he owns. Blest Coxcomb!" (Ernst, *Chesterfield*, 157). The peerage, moreover, was not altogether the



reward of his ignoble intrigues; it was, to some extent, a recognition of his abilities. For, as Cumberland expresses it, Lord Bute, from whom he received it, "was himself too much a man of letters and a patron of the sciences to overlook a witty head that bowed so low; he accordingly put a coronet upon it" (*Memoirs*, i. 190). Dodington was incidentally the means, probably at Cumberland's suggestion, of advancing that erratic genius Richard Bentley, a son of the famous Master of Trinity, Cambridge. Lord Bute had dreams of becoming the patron of a new Augustan Age, and employed Dodington to pick up men of talent. Dodington speedily recognised Bentley's ability, and engaged his pen for attacks on the Opposition. Bentley made himself so useful in this capacity that he received many favours from Bute, including an annuity. One witty remark of his has been preserved by Walpole. A certain old Lady St. John, devout and narrow-minded, became possessed of a trunk full of letters of the famous Lord Rochester. The value and interest of the letters could not, however, outweigh the lady's detestation of their author's depravity, so, in the interests of morality, she destroyed the whole collection. "And for this," exclaimed Bentley, "her soul is now burning in heaven" (Walpole to Mann, December 21, 1775).

There is another brilliant man of this period whose somnolence might almost be reckoned among his abilities. Lord North (1732-92) is not usually placed among The Wits, though abundantly qualified for this distinction. But the errors and misfortunes of his statesmanship loom so largely in history, that the politician has pretty nearly eclipsed the man. Yet how charming a figure the man presents! He was an accomplished scholar and man of letters, and, till Sheridan came on the scene, he was the only member of the House of Commons whose wit could rival Burke's. His ready repartees, delivered with an imperturbable good temper, used to exasperate Charles Fox, who was not greatly gifted in that direction. A smart repartee of his to Lord Thurlow is, however, recorded by Mr. Molloy. Thurlow had exclaimed sententiously, "When

I forget my debt of gratitude to the King, may God forget me!" "The very best thing He could do for you," retorted Fox (*Reynolds and his Circle*, ii. 484). But the sweetness and amiability of North's disposition, which endeared him even to his opponents, restrained his wit from ever inflicting a wound. "He was not disposed," says Cumberland, "to make an unmerciful use of the power which superiority of talents endowed him with to oppress a weaker understanding; he had great charity for dullness of apprehension, and a pert fellow could not easily put him out of patience; there was no irritability in his nature" (*Memoirs*, ii. 350). On one occasion, while Burke was denouncing him in the House, North sat with his eyes closed in an apparently deep repose. Burke, in the course of his oration, introduced and mispronounced the Latin word "vectigal." "Vectigal," interposed North, and resumed his slumber. On another occasion a political opponent, irritated by North's somnolent indifference to his attack, exclaimed, "The noble lord is even now slumbering over the ruin of his country, at a time——" "I wish to God I was!" ejaculated North, opening his eyes on the discomfited orator (*Memorials and Correspondence of Fox*, i. 121). When the famous Fox-North coalition of 1784 was becoming imminent, a member of Parliament named Martin declared that a starling ought to be kept in the Lobby, to vociferate from day to day "No coalition!" North good-humouredly replied that there was perhaps a great deal of good sense in this patriotic recommendation, but that it was surely unnecessary, as the House had already the advantage of possessing a Martin fully competent to execute this important duty. "The House," we are told, "laughed heartily, and there was very little further cry against the coalition" (*ib.* ii. 27). With North, as with most of the accomplished men of the day, his wit played fondly round the classics. When his son told him that he could no longer afford to keep a favourite mare, North replied

*Equam memento rebus in arduis  
Servare.*

Happy as this was, Burke was perhaps happier still in his



FREDERICK LORD NORTH.



description of Wilkes carried along in triumph by the riotous mob :—

Numerisque fertur  
Lege solutis.

North, of course, stood high in the favour of George III., who violently disliked Fox. On his resignation, in 1782, North observed that though he had often been accused of untruthfulness by the Opposition, he had never been guilty of such mendacity as that of the current *Gazette*, which stated that the King had been *pleased* to appoint Lord Rockingham, Mr. Fox, &c. He kept steadily clear of the gambling which then rioted through society, and in an age of corruption was personally incorrupt. “Never,” says Wraxall, “had any Minister purer hands, nor manifested less rapacity. In fact, he amassed no wealth after an administration of twelve years” (*Memoirs*, i. 371). On March 20, 1782, knowing that he was about to announce his resignation, and that the House would consequently break up early, he kept his carriage waiting. This enabled him to get away earlier than the other members, who had not ordered their carriages till midnight. As he was leaving he turned to the bystanders and said, “I protest, gentlemen, this is the first time in my life I have ever derived any personal advantage from being in the secret” (*ib.* ii. 247). Cumberland had a just grievance against him in respect of the expenses of his Spanish Mission, but could not resist his personal charm. North, in his later years, became quite blind, and retired to Tunbridge Wells. It was here that Cumberland met him again, and remarks, “Lacerated as I was in my feelings, I could not help saying within myself, ‘The Minister indeed has wronged me, but the man atones’” (*Memoirs*, ii. 349). It was at Tunbridge Wells, too, that North encountered an old political opponent, the brutal Barré, who had also been smitten with blindness. “Colonel,” said Lord North, “notwithstanding all that may have passed formerly in Parliament, when we were on different sides, I am persuaded that there are not two men in the kingdom who would now be more happy to see each other” (Wraxall, *Memoirs*, i. 369).

But among the statesmen who found place in the coterie of The Wits, Lord Chesterfield (1694–1773) holds an easy pre-eminence. Johnson said of him that he was a lord among wits and a wit among lords, and gave a still more pungent description of his letters to his son, which need not be repeated here. He had, moreover, rather a wrongheaded grudge against him in reference to the great Dictionary. It seems doubtful whether Boswell is correct in saying that Chesterfield described Johnson as a respectable Hottentot, but it is certain that the natures of the two men were too antipathetic for either to appreciate the other properly. Johnson's suggestion, however, that Chesterfield posed as a lord among wits of a lower social rank is altogether incorrect. No man had a more wholesome scorn for "that very silly pride of Family and Posterity" which he called *Posteromania*, and which he ridiculed by placing among his family portraits two old heads, labelled *Adam de Stanhope* and *Eve de Stanhope* (Ernst, 551). But while Johnson was too unlike Chesterfield to do him justice, Walpole had so much in common with him that he sometimes betrays a jealousy of his talents. He affects to dislike Chesterfield's praise of one of his books, because he cannot forget how many foolish books Chesterfield "has diverted himself with commending." Walpole's own literary judgment was extraordinarily faulty, and a critic who could see no merit in *Tristram Shandy*, and who thought Dante "extravagant, absurd, disgusting—in short, a Methodist in Bedlam" (Walpole to Mason, June 25, 1782), was not entitled to pose as Chesterfield's superior. Again, it was at best only a half-truth to say that Chesterfield was like a diamond which "owed more to being brillianted and polished and well set, than to any intrinsic worth or merit" (Walpole to Mason, April 7, 1774). Nevertheless, on Chesterfield's death, he pays a generous tribute to his wit. "His great fame, and no man had more in his time, arose from his wit. For a series of years nothing was more talked of than Lord Chesterfield's *bons mots*, and many of them were excellent; but many, too, of others were ascribed to him" (Ernst, 551). Chesterfield, writing to his son, says, "A Wit is a

very unpopular denomination, as it carries terror along with it; and people in general are as much afraid of a live Wit, in company, as a woman is of a gun, which she thinks may go off of itself." Probably this was his own experience, for his tongue could be bitter on occasion. One Sir Paul Methuen, a blustering dullard, who was always boasting of his valour with lions and wild beasts, and had smarted under Chesterfield's sarcasm, attempted a clumsy revenge. After playing billiards with Chesterfield in a coffee-house, he declared that he had been asked who it could be with whom he had been playing, whose head was bigger than his body, and whose nose was bigger than his head. Chesterfield, who is described by Hervey as "a stunted giant," may have recognised a foundation of fact in this description, but he quietly replied, "Oh, Sir Paul, you are famous for encountering monsters." Amusing also was the reply with which he baffled an attempt to convert him. His sister, Lady Gertrude Hotham, who had turned Methodist, and Lady Huntingdon conceived the idea of tempting him into one of the Wesleyan establishments in Wales by praising the beauty of the mountain scenery. Chesterfield, however, divining their intention, suddenly exclaimed, "Hold, ladies; I don't love mountains; when your ladyships' faith has removed the mountains, I will go thither with all my heart" (Walpole to Mann, April 17, 1775). Not long before his death, somebody having asked him about the health of his friend Lord Tyrawley, he replied, "To tell you the truth, Tyrawley and I have been dead these two years, but we don't choose to have it known" (Ernst, 553). Johnson, who declared that Chesterfield's witticisms were almost all puns, admitted the wit of this remark. Hanbury Williams testifies to his conversational powers, which could keep Lady Fanny Shirley absorbed—

In that eternal whisper which begun  
 Ten years ago, and never will be done;  
 For tho' you know he sees her every day,  
 Still he has ever something new to say :  
 \*            \*            \*            \*            \*  
 He never lets the conversation fall,  
 And I'm sure Fanny can't keep up the ball.

Moreover, he could write as well as talk, and his bright letters to Mrs. Howard, Madame de Monconseil, and others if not so amusing as Walpole's, are much more polished. Even George II., who disliked him, yielded, once at any rate, to the readiness of his wit. Chesterfield having tendered a commission to be filled in with the name of a person whom the King detested, the latter refused angrily, exclaiming, "I would rather have the Devil." "With all my heart," replied Lord Chesterfield, "I only beg leave to put your Majesty in mind that the commission is indited to our right trusty and well-beloved cousin." This was too much for the King, who laughed and said, "My lord, do as you please" (Ernst, 322).

In later life Chesterfield grew deaf, and David Garrick based on this affliction a neat compliment to him in the *Petition of the Fools to Jupiter*, which appeared in *The New Foundling Hospital of Wit* (ii. 197).

The poem relates how—

Some years ago the Fools assembled,  
Who long at Stanhope's wit had trembled,  
And with repeated strokes grown sore,  
Most zealously did Jove implore,  
That he should shield them from that wit,  
Which, pointed well, was sure to hit.

Jupiter is disposed to listen to the appeal, and inquires :—

But tell me how, for I am willing  
To grant your wish, on this side killing,  
And shield you for the time to come.

The Fools instantly reply :—

Strike Chesterfield deaf, blind, and dumb.

But this the god considers too drastic a measure :—

I can't indulge your foolish pride,  
And punish all the world beside.

Some relief, however, he will give :—

To mend a little your condition,  
I'll grant one third of your petition ;  
He shall be deaf, and you be free  
From his keen, brilliant repartee.



Chesterfield's abilities, however, were not merely superficial. As Ambassador at the Hague he displayed great diplomatic skill under very difficult circumstances, and he made an admirable Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. On this occasion he remarked to a Mr. Liddell, whom he had appointed to be his secretary, "Sir, you will receive the emoluments of your place; but I will do the business myself, being determined to have no first minister" (Ernst, 252). Moreover, though he laughs at his own astronomical pretensions, he had the merit of introducing, in 1751, the Bill which reformed our calendar. His famous letters to his son have provoked a general disapprobation; but, in spite of the cynical mould into which his advice is often cast, there runs through it a strong vein of moral and sometimes almost religious earnestness. Observe the decencies, he urges, and cultivate the graces; keep an open countenance but closed lips. These are ordinary maxims of worldly wisdom, but they do not by themselves suffice. It is necessary, "*first*, to do your duty towards God and then man; without which, everything else signifies nothing: *secondly*, to acquire great knowledge; without which, you will be a very contemptible man, though you may be a very honest one: and *lastly*, to be very well bred; without which, you will be a very disagreeable, unpleasing man, though you should be an honest and a learned one." Nothing is "to break into the plain notions of right and wrong, which every man's right reason and plain common sense suggest to him. To do as you would be done by is the plain, sure, and undisputed rule of morality and justice."

Reference has already been made to Sir Charles Hanbury Williams (1708-59). He was one of the inner circle, and is less elusive than many of its members, for his poems enable us to form some idea of his quality. They are, however, very unequal in merit; some of the best are absolutely unquotable, and many are rough in language as well as coarse in ideas. But he had some epigrammatic power. A couple of specimens will suffice:—

A moment's patience, and I'll prove  
 The argument I'm now pursuing;  
 Who is there, but the Lord above,  
 That knoweth what this nation's doing?

\* \* \* \* \*

The Lord knows how our Army'll fare,  
 We're governed by the Lord knows who;  
 Our King is gone, the Lord knows where,  
 And the Lord knows what we shall do.

Again—

That mark of grace is to the clergy giv'n  
 Never to be content on this side heav'n;  
 From step to step they labour still to rise,  
 Until they reach, what last they seek, the skies.

He was a ready writer of squibs in an age when the squib was an effective political weapon; and being an ardent follower of Sir Robert Walpole, he squibbed his rival, Lord Bath, with relentless vigour. The latter is said to have felt these attacks acutely, but they do not really contain anything much more pungent than abuse. Here is a specimen of them :—

Then (but there's a vast space betwixt)  
 The new made Earl of Bath comes next,  
 Stiff in his popular pride;  
 His step, his gait, describe the man;  
 They paint him better than I can,  
 Waddling from side to side.

Lord Bath (1684–1764) was himself a man of wit, a scholar, and an inveterate punster; but, together with Hervey (1695–1743) and Bolingbroke (1678–1751), he belongs to rather an earlier period than that of The Wits. With regard to his puns, the learned Miss Carter, with whom he was very intimate, relates that he sometimes “dignified that species of wit by punning in Greek” (*Memoirs*, i. 394, note). Indeed, the happy humour of his disposition constantly sought expression in his scholarship. So much was this the case that Miss Carter adds, “Whenever he desists from Greek or punning, I take it to be just as bad a symptom as if he had lost his appetite.” Truly, for good or evil, we have travelled some distance from the Parliamentary days of Pulteney; from the humour which

could pun in Greek to the humour which bawls from the Labour benches, "Who's he?" at a Latin quotation.

Perhaps it is inevitable that, in the transmission of historical humour, the daintier elements should tend to evaporate, leaving the heavier to survive. Something of the sort must have happened in the case of Charles Townshend (1725-67), who had a brilliant reputation as a wit among his contemporaries. "He had but to speak," says Walpole, "and all he said was new, natural, and uncommon" (Fitzgerald, *Charles Townshend*, 289). He was certainly a remarkable figure in his time. Though he plunged into all the excesses of the fast set, he contrived to keep in touch with high politics also; and his abilities in this sphere, combined with his charm in private life, called forth from Burke a glowing description of him as "the delight and ornament of this House, and the charm of every private society which he honoured by his presence." Walpole exclaims, "Nothing is luminous compared with Charles Townshend—he drops down dead in a fit, rises in a resurrection, thunders in the capitol, confounds the Treasury Bench, laughs at his own party, is laid up the next day, and overwhelms the Duchess and the good women that go to nurse him" (*ib.* 181). Brilliant, impetuous, and inconstant, he was courted by all parties though trusted by none; for, as Walpole remarks, they "could neither do with him nor without him." Lord Holland, in his memoirs, after speaking of Townshend as the "most vain and fickle of mankind," adds, "If they knew whom to put in his place [Secretary of War] I believe he would be out of it." In a letter of July 9, 1765, to Lady Suffolk, Horace Walpole remarks that Charles Townshend, "besides not knowing either of his own minds, has his brother's [George] minds to know too." A contemporary caricature depicts him with a weathercock fixed in his hat and a spinning-top in his hand (*ib.* 187).\*

\* Ah, Charles, would some blest power divide  
Thyself from thee, that hand might guide  
The helm and rule the nation;  
But now thy whole's so ill combin'd,  
We praise the tongue, and give the mind  
Our scorn and execration.

. *New Foundling Hospital of Wit*, ii. 121.

In these respects he was plainly the son of his mother, the clever and audacious scapegrace "Etheldreda." He seems to have been regarded as a sort of magnificent curiosity. Fitzherbert remarked to Cumberland that "a great nation like ours should have a Charles Townshend in it for a show, as a grand menagerie should have an ostrich" (Cumberland, *Memoirs*, ii. 345). Such of his wit, however, as has come down to us is for the most part mere buffoonery. He mimics his mother-in-law, the Dowager Duchess of Argyle, when talking at the top of her voice to the deaf Lady Suffolk, by shouting in the same tone of voice, "Large stewing oys-ters!"—a common street-cry at the time. More indiscreetly still he ridiculed Lord Bute's slow pedantic manner of speech to his face, by repeating in a loud whisper, "Min-ute guns!" There is not much subtlety about humour of this kind, but to do him justice, he had some slightly higher flights. When a motion to increase the salaries of the judges was carried by 169 to 39, he observed that the Book of Judges had been saved by the Book of Numbers. In 1762 the Duc de Nivernais came to England to settle the preliminaries of the peace of Fontainebleau. His frail and worn appearance got him the nickname of the Duke of Barebones, and Charles Townshend remarked that the French had sent over the preliminaries of an ambassador to conclude the preliminaries of peace. Pitt the Younger on a certain occasion had been fiercely attacked in the House of Commons by Barré. Townshend was shocked by the savagery of Barré's denunciations, and seeing another member offer him a biscuit, exclaimed, "Oh, you should feed him on raw flesh!" The following description is given of Barré in *A Monody in the House of Commons (New Foundling Hospital of Wit*, ii. 121):—

Wit, malice, cunning, knowledge, sense,  
 Together braze with impudence  
     From fam'd Hibernian quarry;  
 Sharpset, this weapon will be fit  
 To arm a Shelburne, stab a Pitt,  
     In short—will be a Barré.

In point of mere ability Sheridan (1751–1816) was, of

course, in the front rank, but he can hardly be reckoned among the fashionable Wits. Moreover, his connection with the stage was socially and even politically a disadvantage to him. There was a story that George Selwyn and Lord Bessborough had arranged that one or other of them should always be at hand to blackball Sheridan whenever he was balloted for at Brooks's. Accordingly his friends contrived to get these obstinate opponents out of the way at the critical moment, by sending a message to Lord Bessborough that his house was on fire, and another to Selwyn that "Mie-Mie" had been suddenly taken ill. Unfortunately for the story, however, the records of Brooks's show that Sheridan was elected to the club on November 2, 1780, while Lord Bessborough did not become a member of it till 1782 (*Memorials of Brooks's*, p. 254). His writings are his best credentials and they speak for themselves, but there is a parliamentary *bon mot* of his which is worth quoting. The purity of life which distinguished the younger Pitt was regarded with amusement or even contempt by many of his contemporaries. Once, having been detained by some business in the House of Lords, he appeared late in the House of Commons. "*Jam redit et virgo*," was Sheridan's remark.

Few of The Wits have left much behind them to guide our judgment, but in many cases nothing whatever has come down to us except the bare reputation. Gilly Williams (1716-1805) was almost as famous as Selwyn, but tradition has preserved none of his sayings, and his letters, though bright enough at times, show no sparkle of wit. Lord Ossory, discussing the Wits of his own day, says: "Horace Walpole was an agreeable lively man, very affected, always aiming at wit, in which he fell very short of his old friend, George Selwyn, who possessed it in the most genuine but indescribable degree. Hare's conversation abounded with wit, and perhaps of a more lively kind; so did Burke's, though with much alloy of bad taste; but on the whole my brother the General [Richard Fitzpatrick] was the most agreeable man in society of any of them."

James Hare (1749–1804) was the son of an apothecary at Winchester and the close friend of Charles Fox at Eton and Oxford. His epitaph was written by the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, and began :—

Can it be true—and midst the senseless dead,  
Must sorrowing thousands mourn the loss of Hare?

*The Gentleman's Magazine* (1804, Pt. i. p. 204) in an obituary notice of him, says: "In all the graces of conversation, in vivacity, in boundless wit, in social elocution [a somewhat mysterious accomplishment], gaiety of mind, happiness of allusion and combination; in the brightest conversation of an imagination fraught with the treasures of ingenuity, erudition, classical discrimination, and sound judgment, Hare was almost unrivalled."

We might be inclined to treat this overwrought rhetoric as merely an outburst of *post mortem* adulation, were it not that while living he had been praised by his contemporaries in much the same strain. Wraxall attests the brilliancy of his wit and talents, while admitting (as was the case) that they were useless in debate. Walpole couples him with Selwyn as the first of The Wits. In a letter to Lady Ossory (September 9, 1783) disclaiming the authorship of one of Hare's stories, he remarks: "He has a great deal too much wit for me to presume to deck myself in his plumes, I who am a jackdaw to him." And yet, beyond some lively letters, not a word of it all remains.

Fitzpatrick \* (1747–1813) is a good instance of the fashionable literary Wit. His best remembered production is *Dorinda, a Town Eclogue*. He contributed to the *Rolliad* and wrote the prologue to *The Critic*. He used to turn out society verses and other similar trifles, which Walpole says "are written with the ease of his common conversation, and in which rhymes seem the most proper words that could have been chosen to express his thoughts" (Walpole to Lady Ossory, January 8, 1770). It is probable enough that this description at once indicates his powers and defines his limitations. It suggests a writer with a flowing

\* See p. 259.

pen, a knack of versification, and a cultivated and scholarly taste. This he may well have been; but if he was anything more we do not know it, and his wit at any rate has perished with him. Walpole has preserved these two charades of Fitzpatrick's, which were sent to him by Lady Ossory (Walpole to Conway, October 29, 1786):—

- (1) In concert, song, or serenade,  
My first requires my second's aid.  
To those residing near the Pole  
I would not recommend my whole.
- (2) Charades of all things are the worst,  
But yet my best have been my first.  
Who with my second are concern'd,  
Will to despise my whole have learn'd.

He wrote his own epitaph, which is engraved on his tomb in Sunninghill churchyard. This is now only partly decipherable, but I am indebted to Mrs. Snowdon, of Sunninghill, for the following copy of it\* :—

Whose turn is next? This monitory stone  
Replies, vain passenger, perhaps thy own.  
If, idly curious, thou wilt seek to know  
Whose relics mingle with the dust below,  
Enough to tell thee that his destined span  
On earth he dwelt—and like thyself a man.  
Nor distant far th'inevitable day,  
When thou, poor mortal, shalt like him be clay.  
Through life he walk'd unemulous of fame,  
Nor wished beyond it to preserve a name,  
Content if friendship o'er his humble bier  
Drop but the heartfelt tribute of a tear;  
Though countless ages should unconscious glide  
Nor learn that ever he had lived or died.

With Horace Walpole we stand on firmer ground, for he has left us an excellent sample of his quality in his inimitable letters. Warburton, without much apparent reason, doubts whether he talked as brilliantly as he wrote. Lord Ossory's opinion, already mentioned, may point to

\* Since the above was written the tomb and its epitaph have been restored.

this conclusion, but it reads rather as if he were prejudiced in favour of Richard Fitzpatrick. Miss Berry and Hannah More, on the other hand, speak of the charm of Walpole's conversation, and their testimony is supported by Wraxall. Certainly in his letters there is nothing to suggest the laborious efforts at wit of which Lord Ossory speaks. On the contrary, the humour in them seems to tumble out of itself, and often so fast as to prejudice the composition. As he expresses it himself, "I never could *compose* letters; they were forced to write themselves and live upon their daily bread" (Walpole to Lady Ossory, July 23, 1775). Again he declares, "St. Paul is my model for letter-writing, who, being a man of fashion and very unaffected, never studies for what he shall say, but in one paragraph takes care of Timothy's soul, and in the next of his own cloak" (Walpole to Lady Ossory, October 8, 1777). Even in his letters to Sir Horace Mann, which are of a comparatively serious character, witty sallies pop up irrepressibly. On June 11, 1744, when the invasion of the Young Pretender was threatening, Walpole writes to Mann: "If you have the least interest in any one Madonna in Florence, pay her well for all the service she can do us. If she can work miracles, now is her time. If she can't, I believe we shall all be forced to adore her." Some of his good sayings are pretty generally known, such as his description of the floor of Ranelagh as being "all of beaten princes," or his account of the highwaymen near Strawberry Hill. But much of his wit is too dainty to bear transplanting, and to be appreciated properly must be read in its own context. In one way or another he has a good deal to say about the weather. The English climate he thinks is delightful—but only "when framed and glazed." On August 8, 1777, he writes to Lady Ossory: "I am glad summer is come along with her [the wife of the French Ambassador]. I began to think it was taken by a privateer." Writing to Lady Aylesbury from Strawberry Hill on June 8, 1784, he says, "The month of June, according to custom immemorial, is as cold as Christmas. I had a fire last night, and all my rosebuds, I believe, would



have been very glad to sit by it." He had been impressing his architectural views on Lady Suffolk, and he writes thereon to his old friend Chute on June 29, 1758: "My Lady Suffolk has at last submitted her barn to our ordination. As yet it is only in Deacon's orders; but will very soon receive our last imposition of hands." *The Critical Review* attacked him for not having referred to Guthrie in his book on Richard III. Walpole retorted that he quoted the living works of dead authors, not the dead works of living ones. Describing the banquets at Cambridge prepared by the Duke of Newcastle on his being made Chancellor of the University in 1749, he says: "His cooks have been there these ten days, distilling essences of every living creature, and massacring and confounding all the species that Noah and Moses took such pains to preserve and distinguish." Writing to Mann on August 1, 1760, he has an amusing hit at Clive, whom he detested: "Lord Clive is arrived all over estates and diamonds. If a beggar asks charity, he says, 'Friend, I have no small brilliants about me.'" There was a good deal of talk about "*bon ton*" in his time; as to which he observes: "It is generally the tone of people who have not yet got into good company. . . . Young men of sense lose it soon; young men who have not sense keep it even after it has ceased to be anybody's tone" (Walpole to Mann, January 14, 1772). In his fifty-eighth year he writes playfully to Lady Ossory about a ball which he had attended: "Last night I was at a ball at the Lady's Club. . . . Don't wonder that I was at a ball; I have discovered that I am a year younger than I thought, yet I shall not use this year yet, but come out with it a dozen years hence" (Walpole to Lady Ossory, February 1, 1775). Again he writes to Mason, April 20, 1776: "Your obedient journalist proceeds. He might plead a headache; but as that is generally pleaded when not felt, a real one must not be disgraced by being turned into an excuse, especially by so sacred a minister of truth as a news-writer." "Can you recommend a First Minister?" he writes to George Montagu (October 28, 1756); "we want one so much that we do not insist on his having a character from his last

place; there will be good vails." In a letter to Lady Ossory of October 18, 1783, he describes one of his female relations "who is a mighty dealer in those winks which she thinks Providence deals her upon every occasion, and, though they never come to pass, she does not suspect that Providence is making a fool of her—or rather made her so once for all."

One more quotation must close the list. Writing on February 21, 1785, to Thomas Walpole the younger, he says, "Lady Gower is dead and puts one hundred and thirty-two persons into close mourning; some, indeed, will only wear black strings to their corals."

It is difficult to form an estimate of the wit of The Wits which shall be at once comprehensive and accurate. Criticism is hampered not only by the scantiness of material, but also by the fact that the term "wit" bore a very different meaning in the eighteenth century to that which it bears in the twentieth. Addison has several essays on wit in the *Spectator* of 1711, which are rather curious reading. It is clear from his protests that, up to his time, anagrams, chronograms, lipograms, rebuses, acrostics, and even poems in the shape of fans, eggs, wings, and so forth, were all regarded as forms of wit. He discusses at some length the distinction between true, false, and what he calls mixed wit. True wit is defined (*Spectator*, No. 62) as consisting in the resemblance of ideas, false wit in the resemblance of words, and mixed wit partly in the resemblance of ideas and partly in that of words. At the present time punning is rather severely repressed, being chiefly confined to the jocular aged; yet it survived well into the Victorian Age as the extravaganzas of our youth may remind us. But with the exception of Walpole, The Wits, including even Lord Chesterfield, were punsters almost to a man. Punning, according to Addison (*Spectator*, No. 61), "is a form of false wit which has been recommended by the practice of all ages." He regards it, in fact, as a form of original sin, which no social regeneration can effectively extirpate. He tells us further that "the age in which the pun chiefly flourished was in the reign of King James the First. That

learned monarch was himself a tolerable punster, and made very few bishops or privy-counsellors that had not some time or other signalised themselves by a clinch or a *conundrum*." We hear, too, of a friend of his own, who had "dined with Mr. Swan, the famous punster," and who, on being asked to give some account of Swan's conversation, replied "that he generally talked in the *Paranomasia*, that he sometimes gave into the *Plocè*, but that in his humble opinion he shined most in the *Antanaclassis*." Ordinary conversation could hardly survive the terrors of this kind, and it is therefore not surprising to learn from Addison that punning had then become "entirely banished out of the learned world." At the same time he is not comfortable about the future. "There is no question," he says, "but as it has sunk in one age and rose in another, it will again recover itself in some distant period of time." As a matter of fact it recovered itself in a very short period of time, and evidently became much favoured by the Wits of society. On August 20, 1776, Chesterfield writes to Dodington, "I can't omit telling you that puns are extremely in vogue, and the licence very great; the variation of three or four letters in a word of six breaks no squares, insomuch that an indifferent punster may make a very good figure in the best companies" (Seward's *Anecdotes*, ii. 391).

Addison's test of a witticism is to translate it into another language. "If it bears the test, you may pronounce it true; but if it vanishes in the experiment you may conclude it to have been a pun." Obviously, however, there are puns and puns; and the native demerits of a pun may be redeemed by its ingenuity. *Equam memento rebus in arduis servare*, though a mere pun, is far above the level of Selwyn's laborious jokes. So is Swift's apt quotation on the violin which was swept down by a lady's dress and broken:—

*Mantua vae miseræ nimium vicina Cremonæ.*

*Numerisque fertur lege solutis* is higher still and will practically bear Addison's test of translation into English. And with these may be compared Erskine's epigram to the

beautiful Lady Payne. While dining at Sir Ralph Payne's he was suddenly taken ill, and suffered so severely that he had to leave the room. On his return Lady Payne asked anxiously as to his condition, and in reply he scribbled these lines:—

'Tis true I am ill, but I cannot complain;  
For he never knew Pleasure who never knew Payne.

But apart from the special difficulties of the case, it is always hard to appraise the wit of a past age. We have lost beyond recall the environment in which it arose, the cast of mind to which it appealed, and that inner knowledge which is so often essential to a complete grasp of its meaning. We may probably conclude that the wit of The Wits, with some exceptions, was not of a very high order; but its real interest is historical rather than intellectual. The society in which it arose was, be it remembered, a fashionable society which had hardly been touched by the intellectual impulses then stirring the class below it. It was a society which was only just beginning to shake off the soulless sensualism of the early Georgian times, and to awake to the responsibilities of a civilised community. This regeneration showed itself in many ways beyond the limits of fashionable society. The world became less brutal and more humane. Prize-fighting was suppressed; hospitals were founded; and the stage grew pure. Moral reforms, however, which gain their motive power from some quickening of the multitude's sentiments of right and wrong, move faster than an intellectual advance, which is concerned, not with the multitude, but with a chosen few, and which appeals rather to the head than to the heart. The standard of wit in any particular society depends, and must depend, on the degree of culture to which that society has attained; and the culture of the fashionable world in the days of The Wits was only beginning. Moreover, if we are now inclined to treat the whole tribe of pun, rebus, charade, &c., with a light scorn, we may remember that they were not unwholesome substitutes for the grossness in which the humour of a previous age had disported itself. The conceits which

pleased The Wits may seem trifling to us, with our wider range of interests, vastly increased knowledge, and that expanding versatility which follows in its train. But though they have lost life and savour now, they are a sign of the times to which they belong, and they fill a distinct place in that strange pageant of brilliant contraries which gives its undying interest to the eighteenth century.

## V. AN ECCENTRIC BEAUTY (THE DUCHESS OF QUEENSBERRY)

THE eighteenth century was an age rich in vivid incidents and bewildering contrarieties. The old order had not yet changed, but beneath its surface the new energies which surged in full flood through the later nineteenth century were seething restlessly, and breaking out in many directions. In this respect it was, so to speak, an age of fireworks. Brilliant novelties—often shortlived enough—brilliant audacities, brilliant follies kept flashing across the scene; and of these wild meteors none flashed brighter in the world of society than the lovely and impetuous woman, “Whose wit, beauty, and oddities made her from her early years, when she was ‘Kitty beautiful and young,’ to the end of a long life, a general object of animadversion, censure, and admiration.” This is Mrs. Delany’s description of Catherine Hyde, her kinswoman, contemporary, and friend, who subsequently became celebrated as the Duchess of Queensberry.

Lady Catherine Hyde was the third daughter of Henry second Earl of Rochester and fourth Earl of Clarendon, and a great-granddaughter of Edward, the first and famous Earl of Clarendon. The reference books are mostly silent as to the date of her birth, but it certainly took place in 1700. Mrs. Delany, who was born on May 14, 1700, says that Lady Catherine was exactly her own age; and this is borne out by Horace Walpole, who, in a letter of July 19, 1777, to Lady Ossory, remarks that the Duchess of Queensberry had died two days previously at the age of seventy-seven. Lady Theresa Lewis (*Lives of Friends and Contemporaries of Lord Clarendon*, iii. 418), mentions that she was born



Emery Walker, Scot.

*Catherine Hyde Duchess of Queensberry.*

LONDON: EDWARD ARNOLD.





on February 10, 1700, and though no authority is given for this statement it is likely to be correct. About 1708, as Mrs. Delany tells us, "the fine Gothic gate which divided Whitehall, commonly called the Cockpit, from King Street, was inhabited by Hyde, Earl of Rochester, younger brother of the Earl [second Earl] of Clarendon, and second son to the great Chancellor." This Hyde must have been Lawrence, first Earl of Rochester and Lady Catherine's grandfather. It was here that Mrs. Delany, who was connected with the Hydes, met her when they were both about eight years old, and here that the foundations of their lifelong friendship were laid. Lady Catherine's parents were a singularly handsome couple, and she may therefore have drawn her remarkable beauty from a double source. Swift speaks of her mother as "my mistress Rochester," and, half in fun, half in earnest, resents the daughter's rivalling the mother in charm. Writing to Gay on November 10, 1730, he says: "I desire to present my most humble acknowledgments to my lady Duchess in return for her civility. I hear an ill thing, that she is *matre pulchra filia pulchrior*. I never saw her since she was a girl, and should be angry she should excel her mother, who was long my principal goddess." But her character was even more conspicuous than her appearance. Self-willed, haughty, and headstrong, she soon began to give her family a taste of her quality. Prior has commemorated her outbreaks in some verses called *The Female Phaethon*. The story as told in them is not very clear, but they relate to some concessions wrung by Lady Catherine in her childhood from her reluctant mother:—

Thus Kitty beautiful and young,  
And wild as colt untamed,  
Bespoke the fair from whence she sprung,  
With little rage inflamed.

Inflamed with rage at sad restraint  
Which wise Mamma ordain'd,  
And sorely vex'd to play the saint  
Whilst wit and beauty reign'd.

Must Lady Jenny\* frisk about,  
 And visit with her cozens?  
 At Balls must she make all the Rout,  
 And bring home hearts by dozens?

What has she better, pray, than I?  
 What hidden charms to boast,  
 That all mankind for her should die,  
 Whilst I am scarce a toast?

Dearest Mamma, for once let me  
 Unchain'd my fortune try;  
 I'll have my Earl as well as she,  
 Or know the reason why.

I'll soon with Jenny's pride quit score,  
 Make all her lovers fall;  
 They'll grieve I was not loos'd before,  
 She I was loos'd at all.

Fondness prevail'd, Mamma gave way:  
 Kitty, at heart's desire,  
 Obtain'd the chariot for a day,  
 And set the world on fire.

It may be inferred from a remark of Horace Walpole's that she was not more than fifteen at the date of this poem; to which, when she was seventy-one, he added an epigrammatic stanza of his own. In a letter to Mann on April 26, 1771, he says: "The Duchess of Queensberry . . . is still figuring in the world, not only by giving frequent balls, but really by her beauty. Reflect that she was a goddess in Prior's days! This was fifty-six years ago or more. I gave her this stanza:—

To many a Kitty, Love his car  
 Will for a day engage,  
 But Prior's Kitty, ever fair,  
 Obtained it for an age!

And she is old enough to be pleased with the compliment."

Fifteen is rather a tender age for a society "goddess." But Kitty seems to have begun her life young; for, according to Lady Theresa Lewis, she was made Lady of the

\* Her elder sister, Lady Essex.

Bedchamber to Queen Anne at the age of eleven. At the age of twenty she married Charles Douglas, the third Duke of Queensberry, on March 10, 1720. The Duke had been appointed a Privy Councillor and Lord of the Bedchamber by George I., but the Duchess came of a family with Jacobite leanings, and it is possible, therefore, that the path of her Court life was not too easy under the *régime* favoured by George I. Throughout his reign the Government was in the hands of a Whig Administration, at first under Lord Townshend and Sir Robert Walpole, and latterly under Walpole alone. The Tories were for the time politically prostrate; but in 1727 the sudden death of George I. put an entirely new complexion upon affairs, and the hopes of the anti-Walpole party rose high. Swift, who was bitterly hostile to Walpole, was about to leave for France, but postponed his journey, chiefly on the urgent advice of Mrs. Howard, the new King's mistress. Pulteney, Bolingbroke, and the rest of the "Patriots," as they called themselves, were busy with a thousand schemes in reference to their return to power, which now seemed so secure. And, indeed, their hopes were justified. George II. while Prince of Wales had naturally, as head of the Opposition, been strongly antagonistic to Walpole, whose downfall seemed inevitable. "It is agreed," writes Swift to Dr. Sheridan on June 24, 1727, "that the Ministry will be changed, but the others will have a soft fall; although the King must be excessive generous if he forgives the treatment of some people" (*i.e.* Walpole).

But these expectations were doomed to a dramatic disappointment. The story is well known, and need not be retold at length. The new King nominated Sir Spencer Compton as his Minister, but his manifest incapacity, Walpole's adroitness, and the sagacity of Queen Caroline brought about a sudden revulsion in Walpole's favour; and on June 24, 1727 (the very day of Swift's letter), he was reappointed First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. Horace Walpole in his *Reminiscences* gives an amusing account of the way in which this unexpected event was made known to the

astonished Court. The King and Queen held a reception in Leicester Fields, to which all the nobility and gentry in town flocked to kiss their hands. Lady Walpole was there among the rest; but, as the time-serving crowd had not heard of Compton's "evaporation," she could not make her way to the Queen between the scornful backs and elbows of her late devotees. "But no sooner was she descried by her Majesty, than the Queen said aloud, 'There I am sure I see a friend!' The torrent divided and shrunk to either side; 'and as I came away,' said my mother, 'I might have walked over their heads, if I had pleased.'"

For the time, therefore, the intrigues of the Patriots were crushed, and throughout the whole of Walpole's ascendancy the Tories were generally discountenanced. This seems to have affected the Duchess's position at Court, and, moreover, disagreements had arisen between the Duke and the Walpole Ministry. Under these circumstances he had determined to resign his appointments, when this step was precipitated by the impetuous conduct of his Duchess.

Shortly after her marriage in 1720 the Duchess seems to have taken up the poet Gay with some ardour, a process which ended, as Lord Morley remarks, in his becoming the Duchess's lapdog. He still, however, worked in a desultory fashion with his pen, and on January 29, 1728, he produced *The Beggar's Opera*. This proved a brilliant success, both for Gay and for Rich, the owner of the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. In less than two months Gay had netted between £700 and £800 by it, and Rich nearly £4,000. The wits of the day said that the opera had made Gay rich and Rich gay. Encouraged by this success he wrote a sequel entitled *Polly*: but before it could be produced Rich received an order from the Duke of Grafton, who was then Lord Chamberlain, forbidding its rehearsal. Objection had been taken to the *Beggar's Opera* on the ground that the spectacle of a highwayman hero tended to encourage crime. There may have been something in this, for, nearly fifty years later, Sir John Fielding, the Westminster Magistrate, begged Garrick in

1773 to suppress the play, as the character of Macheath inspired apprentices to highway robbery. We learn from Lady Mary Coke that he had preferred the same request to Lord Hertford, begging that, if the play itself could not be stopped, Macheath might at least be executed, instead of being acquitted, on the stage. Probably, however, the real reason for the prohibition of *Polly* was its satirical treatment of Walpole and the Administration. In any case the move was regarded as being of a political character, and in this way acquired a notoriety far beyond its intrinsic importance. The Duchess of Queensberry flung herself into the fight, and made Gay's quarrel her own. She pestered the King to cancel the order of the Lord Chamberlain, and even offered to read the play to him in his closet, that he might satisfy himself of its inoffensiveness. The King replied that he would be delighted to receive the Duchess in his closet, but would hope to amuse her better than by any literary employment. However, all efforts proved ineffectual, and it was determined to bring out the play as a book. This plan succeeded admirably. Gay's personal and political friends contributed handsomely, the Duchess of Marlborough giving him £100 for a single copy. Ultimately he made £1,100 by the book, and consequently had no substantial cause for discontent. The Duchess of Queensberry busied herself vigorously in the matter, and even went to the length of openly soliciting subscriptions for the book at a Drawing Room. This was an indiscretion which could not be overlooked, and she was forbidden the Court. Infuriated at this treatment, she returned the following answer by the Vice-Chamberlain\* :—

“The Duchess of Queensberry is surprised and well pleased that the King hath given her soe agreeable a command as to stay from Court, where she never came for diversion, but to bestow a greater civility upon the King and Queen: she hopes by such an unprecedented order as this that the King will see as few as he wishes att his Court (particularly such as dare to thinke or speake

\* Townshend Papers. Hist. MSS. Rep. XI. App., Pt. iv. 41.

truth). I dare not do otherwise, and ought not, nor could not have imagined that it would not have been the highest compliment that I could possibly pay the King to endeavour to support truth and innocence in his house. Particularly when the King and Queen both told me that they had not read Mr. Gay's play. I have certainly done right, then, to stand by my own word, rather than his Grace of Grafton's, who hath neither made use of *truth*, *judgment*, nor *honour*, through this whole affaire, either for himselfe or his freinds.

"C. QUEENSBERRY."

The rage which transported the Duchess from the third person to the first in the middle of this undignified effusion makes the whole letter read like the outburst of an angry maidservant. Gay, however, thought that it "showed spirit, honour, goodness, understanding, and good sense." Mrs. Delany, who at times can be as platitudinous as a Greek chorus, points out that there were faults on each side, and concludes with a little homily on our duty to our superiors. The Duke at once threw up his appointment and retired with the Duchess to Scotland. Subsequently, at the rupture of Frederick, Prince of Wales, with the King, he was made a Lord of the Prince's Bedchamber, and on the accession of George III. was appointed Keeper of the Scottish Signet, and soon afterwards Lord Justice General.

Gay became for the time a sort of political martyr; in a letter to Swift, of March 19, 1728, Dr. Arbuthnot says: "The inoffensive John Gay is now become one of the obstructions to the peace of Europe, the terror of the Ministers, the chief author of the *Craftsman*,\* and all the seditious pamphlets which have been published against the Government. He has got several turned out of their places; the greatest ornament of the Court † banished from it for his sake; another great lady ‡ in danger of being

\* A political paper started by Pulteney to attack the Government.

† The Duchess of Queensberry.

‡ Probably Mrs. Howard, who was firm friend to Gay.

*chasée* likewise; about seven or eight Duchesses pushing forward like the ancient Circumcelliones in the Church, who shall suffer martyrdom upon his account first. He is the darling of the city. If he should travel about the country, he would have hecatombs of roasted oxen sacrificed to him. Since he became so conspicuous Will Pulteney hangs his head to see himself so much outshone in the career of glory. I hope he will get a good deal of money by printing his play; but I really believe he would get more by showing his person." But whatever this opportunity was worth, Gay failed to utilise it; and, indeed, he soon fell into a cosy berth, much more congenial to his easygoing habits than the stormy arena of politics. Confirmed place-hunter as he was, he was nevertheless too indolent to prosecute even this pursuit with vigour, expecting his friends to relieve him of the labour. Strange to say, to a great extent they accepted this situation, and we find Gay naïvely complaining to Swift that his friends "wonder at each other for not providing for me, and I wonder at them all." Perpetually boasting of his love of independence, he was content to submit to the most servile conditions of patronage, sometimes accompanied by a neglect which no self-respecting man would have endured. On one occasion Lord Burlington had provided him with a lodging at Burlington House, but seems to have given little or no heed to his board. Arbuthnot visited him there professionally, and prescribed a poultice for his swollen face. Coming again, Arbuthnot found that Gay had eaten his poultice for hunger.

But a pliable creature of this kind was an ideal protégé for the Duchess. She loved to manage, and she certainly could manage Gay to her heart's content. After the *Polly* affair she took him to her own house; boarded, lodged, and doctored him; nursed him devotedly through an illness and kept a severe check on his expenditure. "I was a long time," writes Gay to Swift on December 6, 1730, "before I could prevail with her to allow myself a pair of shoes with two heels; for I had lost one, and the shoes were so decayed that they were not worth mending." In reference

to the Duchess's coddling, Pope writes to him (August 18, 1730): "How comes it that Providence has been so unkind to me (who am a greater object of compassion than any fat man alive), that I am forced to drink wine, while you riot in water, prepared with oranges by the hand of the Duchess of Queensberry?" Indeed, according to local tradition, the Duchess used even to rescue Gay from the pot-houses to which he would occasionally contrive to escape. On his death in 1732 she and the Duke attended to the distribution of his small fortune and placed a monument to his memory in Westminster Abbey. Gay fell into all her arrangements without any show of reluctance. He was placed on the establishment as the Duke's secretary, and lived the life of a tame cat, growing fat in the luxury which was so congenial to him. His position in the Queensberry household was to all intents and purposes a charitable provision for his support. Yet he writes with a grand unconsciousness to Swift on March 20, 1730: "I am very happy in my present independency. I envy no man; but have the due contempt of voluntary slaves of birth and fortune." From the letters of Pope and others it is clear that Gay now became to a great extent lost to his old circle; but in his new position he was able to throw a good deal of light on the life and character of his patroness. It was a fashionable whim of those days to write what were called "Cheddar" letters, that is to say, letters to which more than one writer contributed. The Duchess was very fond of this practice, and wrote many such letters in conjunction with Gay, and sometimes also with her husband, or her brother, Lord Cornbury. They are often quite light, and usually amusing. The following extracts from one of August 9, 1729, will serve to give an idea of them. The letter was to Mrs. Howard, and on the top of the paper was a blot. The Duchess begins: "You are resolved not to send the first blot, so you see I do. . . . Say something for me very obliging to Mrs. Meadows and Mrs. Carteret.\* Mr. Gay borrows the rest of the paper for his use.—C. Q."

\* Maids of Honour.



Here the Duke interposes with a short paragraph ending: "That blot was of my making, and not on purpose, as witness QUEENSBERRY."

Gay then takes up the tale: "Now you know everything about the blot, I will go on with my letter. We do not play at cards, and yet the days are too short for us. I know that this will scarce be credited; yet it is true. We do not want one another's company, nor are we tired of one another. This too sounds incredible; yet it is true." (Then some more blots.) "The Duchess made these blots and values herself upon it. I desire you would send word whether white currants be proper to make tarts; it is a point that we dispute upon every day, and will never be ended unless you decide it. The Duchess would be extremely glad if you could come here this day se'nnight; but if you cannot, come this day fortnight at farthest, and bring as many unlikely people as you can to keep you company. . . . The Duchess hath left off taking snuff ever since you have; but she takes a little every day. I have not left it off, and yet take none; my resolution not being so strong. . . . General Dormer [a notorious gourmet] refused to eat a wheatear, because they call it here a fern-knacker; but since he knew it was a wheatear, he is extremely concerned. . . . The Duke hath rung the bell for supper, and says, 'How can you write such stuff!'

And so we conclude,  
As 'tis fitting we should  
For the sake of our food;  
So don't think me rude.  
Would my name were Gertrude  
Or Simon or Jude.

PS. . . . There is a cock pheasant at Child Grove that is certainly a witch; Mr. White cannot kill it, though he shoots in a Portuguese habit. . . . We liked our mushrooms here very well, till General Dormer told us they were tame ones.—J. G."

And here the Duchess interjects a final passage: "It is a pitty—I should spell pity with a double *t*—It is a pity, I say, that so much plain paper should lie waste. We have a

great deal more wit, but no more time. There is a proper care taken that this may not be thought plain paper.—C. Q.”

Elsewhere Gay appeals to Mrs. Howard to be a mediator between the Duchess and himself, “we having at present a quarrel about a fishing-rod”; and complains that her Grace “hath absolutely forbid her dog to be fond of me, and takes all occasions to snub her if she shows me the least civility.”

But matters did not always run so smoothly; for her Grace had caprices, which had to be humoured carefully or else there was trouble. Gay in one letter declared that she was a professed hater of common civility, but this was hardly a correct description. She was not naturally churlish, and indeed had a warm affection for her friends. But unless all went well with her she would not be bothered with the little courtesies which oil the wheels of life. She would turn up at a party just as everybody was leaving. She left letters unanswered, and if her friends remonstrated, would be needlessly rude to them one moment and overwhelm them with repentant apologies the next. She got tired of their company after a time, and took no pains to conceal her irritation if they kept her from the solitude for which she often craved. Thus she writes to Mrs. Howard on November 17, 1730: “I have one here with me whom I like, and I think she loves me (it is Lady Harold). So well I like her, that I would rather have her than not; and that is saying a great deal, considering that I am so constant in my way of thinking that it is best for me to live by myself; and what endears me to her is, that she finds out when I like my own company and at those times she likes her own.”

Again, writing to Miss Ann Pitt on September 14, 1736, she says: “The Countess of March hindered me, two posts, from pleasing myself, neither did she take one step to make the least amends till yesterday morning, when she was so good to stop quite away. I will not tell you that I never met with a more tiresome creature, for the very recollection would be irksome.” Sometimes, too, she was aggressively malicious. She resented anything like display,

and, of set purpose, would take ladies in full finery tramping through the mud, or contrive to upset a tea-service if she thought it too costly for the owner's position. She always insisted on having her own way, and though she often appealed for advice, she was none too well pleased at receiving it. Gay writes to Mrs. Howard on December 17, 1730: "I know she will do what she will; and as little as she likes herself, she likes her own advice better than anybody else's." Some of her cranks may have been due to indifferent health, for, like so many of her contemporaries, she suffered at times severely from headaches, and also from "a strange uneasiness in her bones." In the letter of September 14, 1736, to Miss Pitt above referred to, she writes: "If my head doth not mend very soon, I do not think you will have the merrit of killing me. . . . It is not acute pain, but yet everything that's bad. If my Lady Suffolk could conceive it, it would soften her resentment, for sometimes I am not in the least able to hold down my head for a moment." Perhaps, too, these ailments may have been aggravated by her irregular habits. She would indulge in spasmodic bursts of exercise, followed by long periods of indolence, which may not have harmonised well with the ravenous appetite to which she at one time confessed. When reproached for not taking proper care of herself, she replied curtly that she had an odd constitution and must take an odd way to preserve it. Lady Mary Coke tells us how the Duchess with three other ladies arrived late at the Duke of Montagu's after a walk. "I think I never saw people look in such heats; the Duchess's face was as red as fire, and she said she was in a top sweat, which she looked upon as a supreme happiness." This was in 1769. Three years later Lady Mary quaintly records: "I had eight people to dinner. The Duke and Duchess of Queensberry eat very heartily." By fits and starts she would work at embroidery, or painting and drawing, but her restlessness prevented any real application to these pursuits. Or again, she would play at the contemporary equivalent of the simple life. Writing to Mrs. Howard on May 9, 1730, Gay says, "If you have a mind to

know what she hath done since she came here, the material things that I know of is that she hath worked a rose and milked a cow." This incident inspired the portrait of her by Jervas represented opposite page 112. Mrs. Howard seems to have had a good deal of influence over her, and we find Lord Cornbury writing in 1734 to beg that Lady Suffolk (as Mrs. Howard had then become) would come and keep the Duchess in order. But even Lady Suffolk's gentle spirit was stung to resentment by the Duchess's slights, and she sometimes writes quite bitterly about her. Gay was more circumspect, being content to submit to her imperious protection of him for the sake of the luxuries which gilded his chains. He began also to affect country sports, and tells Swift with evident pride of the partridges which he has shot. But the Duchess made short work of these pretensions, and writes to Swift that when Gay "began to be a sportsman, he had like to have killed a dog; and now every day I expect he will kill himself."

Swift's connection with the Duchess is a curious incident in the life of each of them. Intimate it was, with that intimacy which springs to the surface at once between congenial minds, and yet rigorously distant, for, save for their brief acquaintance in her childhood, they never actually met. Gay was eager to bring them together, though not without an underlying fear of the consequences. He dreaded, with some reason, the possibility of friction between two such headstrong natures, and a friction which might easily be exacerbated by the barbarity of Swift's manners. Accordingly, while he kept stimulating the Duchess to send Swift an invitation to Amesbury, he was trying to coax Swift to accept it, and to behave prettily when he came. On November 9, 1729, he writes to Swift: "To the lady I live with I owe my life and fortune; think of her with respect; value and esteem her as I do; never more despise a fork with three prongs. I wish, too, that you would not eat with the point of your knife.\* She has so much goodness, virtue, and generosity, that if you knew

\* This refers to an incident in Pope's house.

her you would have a pleasure in obliging her as I do. She often wishes she had known you." Later on he tells Swift that the Duchess would be gratified if he wrote a letter for her to her brother, adding: "You always insisted upon a lady's making the first advances to you; I don't know whether you will think this declaration sufficient." Here is Swift's account of this remarkable stipulation. In a letter to Miss Hoadly (daughter of the Archbishop of Dublin), of June 4, 1734, he says: "Madam, when I lived in England, once every year I issued out an edict, commanding that all ladies of wit, sense, merit, and quality, who had an ambition to be acquainted with me, shall make the first advances at their peril; which edict, you may believe, was universally obeyed."

At last, on November 7, 1730, the invitation came, in a postscript, and highly characteristic it was of the writer: "I would fain have you come. I cannot say you will be welcome; for I do not know you, and perhaps I shall not like you; but if I do not (unless you are a very vain person), you shall know my thoughts as soon as I do myself."

Meanwhile Swift had written to Gay, begging him to inform the Duchess with regard to the fork question that "the ill management of forks is not to be helped when they are only bidental, which happens in all poor houses, especially those of poets; upon which account a knife was absolutely necessary at Mr. Pope's, where it was morally impossible, with a bidental fork, to convey a morsel of beef, with the incumbrance of mustard and turnips, into your mouth at once. And her Grace hath cost me thirty pounds to provide tridents for fear of offending her, which sum I desire she will please return to me."

When her invitation arrives he proceeds to answer it with an audacity which is half jest and half earnest: "Madam, my beginning thus low [*i.e.*, low down on the paper] is meant as a mark of respect, like receiving your Grace at the bottom of the stairs. I am glad you know your duty; for it has been a known and established rule above twenty years in England, that the first advances have been constantly made by all ladies who aspired to my acquaintance, and the

greater their quality, the greater were their advances. Yet, I know not by what weakness, I have condescended graciously to dispense with you upon this important article."

Then follow some playful mock negotiations through Gay, who is still not quite easy as to the result of his experiment. "I really think," he writes to Swift on December 6, 1730, "you may safely venture to Amesbury, though indeed the lady here likes to have her own way as well as you; which may sometimes occasion disputes; and I tell you beforehand that I cannot take your part. I think her so often in the right, that you will have great difficulty to persuade me she is in the wrong."

Poor Gay!

The Duchess here adds a paragraph respecting her invitation, and ending with rather an inane apology for her bad spelling and writing. Swift drops upon this with relentless vigour: "I dislike nothing in your letter but an affected apology for bad writing, bad spelling, and a bad pen; which you pretend Mr. Gay found fault with; wherein you affront Mr. Gay, you affront me, and you affront yourself."

The rest of his reply to her (April 13, 1731) is in a more playful strain: "Since Mr. Gay affirms that you love your own way, and since I have the same perfection, I will settle that matter immediately to prevent those ill consequences he apprehends. Your Grace shall have your own way in all places, except your own house and the domains about it. There, and there only, I expect to have mine; so that you have all the world to reign in, bating only two or three hundred acres, and two or three houses in town or country. I will likewise, out of my special grace, certain knowledge, and mere motion, allow you to be right against all human kind, except myself, and to be never in the wrong but when you differ from me. You shall have a greater privilege in the third article of speaking your mind: which I shall generously allow you to do now and then even to myself, and only rebuke you when it does not please me."

Then in the same vein he goes on to inquire of Gay whether the Duchess has a clear voice; whether he may sit

close to her on her left, as his right ear is the best ; whether the parson of the parish can play backgammon and hold his tongue ; whether the Duchess has a good nurse in the house, and how long she will keep him. " When all these preliminaries are settled," he concludes, " I must be very poor, very sick, or dead, or to the last degree unfortunate, if I do not attend you at Amesbury."

The Duchess replies (April 21, 1731) : " All your articles are agreed to. . . . I have not a clear or distinct voice, except when I am angry ; but I am a very good nurse when people do not fancy themselves sick. Mr. Gay knows this ; and he knows too how to play at backgammon. Whether the parson of the parish can, I know not ; but if he cannot hold his tongue, I can. Pray set out the first fair wind, and stay with us as long as ever you please. I cannot name any fixed time that I shall like to maintain you and your equipage ; but if I do not happen to like you, I know I can so far govern my temper as to endure you for about five days."

A few months later the Duke writes to second the Duchess's invitation. It is a charming letter, which makes one regret that the figure of the writer has been so largely eclipsed by that of his wife. Mrs. Delany, while staying with the Duke and Duchess at Cornbury, pays rather a lumbering compliment to the Duke in describing the house. She says, writing to Mrs. Dewes, that it is " the most comfortable and pleasant fine house I ever saw, for it is not only magnificent and elegant but *convenient* and *rational* : it resembles its master, and is both strong and genteel, nothing can be more agreeable than his behaviour." Lady Mary Coke testifies to the same effect, declaring that however ungracious the Duchess might be, " the Duke is always civil." And his letter to Swift reveals the easy and delicate courtesy that we should expect from such a man. " I have hitherto refrained from writing to you," he says, " having never had the pleasure of conversing with you otherwise ; and as that is a thing I most sincerely wish, I would not venture to meddle in a negociation that seemed to be in so fair a way of producing that desirable end. But

our friend John [Gay] has not done me justice if he has never mentioned to you how much I wish for the pleasure of seeing you here; and though I have not till now avowedly taken any steps toward bringing it about, what has passed conducive to it has been all along with my privity and consent, and I do now formally ratify all the preliminary articles and conditions agreed to on the part of my wife, and will undertake for the due observance of them."

Yet Swift never went, though the Duchess importuned him repeatedly. At one time he says he is detained by a law-suit, at others that he is lame, or ill, or deaf; and there may have been some substance in all these excuses, but the true reason lay deeper. Bitterly as he reviled the fate which condemned him to reside in Ireland, he loved the pomp and circumstance of his Irish position; and he never would leave it, though he had many an opportunity of doing so. Lord Bolingbroke, Lord Bathurst, Lord Masham, Lord Shelburne, and Pope pressed him to visit them, but in vain.

"I hate the thoughts of London," he writes to Pope on July 8, 1733, "where I am not rich enough to live without shifting, which is now too late." Whereas in Dublin he is a great personage, who can make coaches, carts, and so forth yield the way to him. Their drivers, he remarks, "dare not insult me like your rascally waggoners or coachmen. . . . There, I walk the streets in peace without being jostled, nor even without a thousand blessings from my friends the vulgar.\* I am Lord Mayor of 120 houses, I am absolute lord of the greatest cathedral in the kingdom, and at peace with the neighbouring princes, the Lord Mayor of the city, and the Archbishop of Dublin"; and for these reasons he declares that he prefers to be a freeman among slaves, rather than a slave among freemen.

Gay died on December 4, 1732, and the Duchess felt his loss deeply. She made some further efforts to induce Swift to visit her; but these proved fruitless, and all intercourse between them seems to have ceased early in 1734. Perhaps it was well for them both. With Gay to stage-manage the early steps of their acquaintance, this might, indeed, have

\* The inhabitants of the liberty of St. Patrick were devoted to him.



warmed into a friendship, making a gracious page in the history of Swift's none too gracious life. But without him the inevitable friction might easily have developed into open hostility; and a hostility between two such characters would have been an ugly record.

Meanwhile the Duchess was being swept once more into the vortex of political activity. Walpole had triumphed completely in 1727; but his insatiable greed of power was rapidly sending new recruits into the enemy's camp. Pulteney and Bolingbroke had been scheming indefatigably for his overthrow, and their prospects began to look brighter. Lord Cornbury and Lord Essex, the Duchess's brother-in-law, were both Patriots, and many a political conference took place at Cassiobury, the residence of Lord Essex, and Dawley, the modest retreat of Lord Bolingbroke. At Court the movement had in Mrs. Howard a secret sympathiser if not an active abettor, while the Duchess, whom Mr. Walter Sichel describes as the Egeria of the party, was also delighted to pose as the dark conspirator. Matters came to a head in 1734. Walpole's following was becoming irresolute, and his position had been damaged by the successful opposition to his Excise Bill. Pulteney had contrived to unite the various sections of the malcontents—Whig or Tory—for a combined attack upon their common enemy. This attack took the form of a motion for the repeal of the Septennial Act, and Sir William Wyndham was selected as the protagonist to deliver it. Wyndham drew a fancy picture of the dangers to which the country might be exposed under a Septennial Parliament dominated by an unscrupulous Minister, making it clear that Walpole was the Minister aimed at. The speech was scathing, vigorous, and effective. Once again the hopes of the opposition rose high; once again they encountered a crushing overthrow. Walpole in his reply drew a picture in return. More or less ignoring Wyndham, he struck straight at Bolingbroke, depicting him as an imaginary "anti-Minister" in this or "some other unfortunate country." He described a man cursed with sordid vanity and selfish ambition, hateful to mankind, and distrusted by his very

followers; a traitor to his country, and false even to the enemies of that country with whom he conspired. The truth in this fierce invective sank deep into the audience, and Walpole triumphed by a majority of 247 to 184. Even the Patriots began to regard Bolingbroke askance, and in 1735 he departed once more to France. Later on he returned to England, where he died in 1751, but from this time he ceased to be of any real account in English politics. In the same year Walpole was returned to power by a general election, and the distracted party to which the Duchess belonged fell back once more into the cold shade of opposition.

The debate on the Septennial Act took place in 1734, and soon afterwards we hear of the Duchess in Scotland chaperoning a young cousin, Jane Leveson Gower, to the Edinburgh balls and assemblies. She writes to Lady Suffolk that she is "tired to death with politics and elections"; but she can find entertainment in studying the Scotch folk and their customs. They all eat with their knives, she says, and drink "dishes" of tea. They have many very extraordinary fashions and her own "tail" makes a notable appearance among them. Like so many other visitors to Auld Reekie, she sighs for the sun, that she may ride on the Monday, "for on Sundays no such things are allowed in this country, though we lie, and swear, and steal, and do all sort of villany every other day the week round." Two months later she writes again to Lady Suffolk. She is still on her travels and makes an amusing protest against some of their inconveniences. "On the road things are often mislaid or not easy to be got at. Now what I miss at present is my senses." Also she is losing her looks, and is going to make mirrors unfashionable. "Adieu, my dear Lady Suffolk, and good-night; I must to bed, in order to get up again: most creatures are made for nothing else, only they do not know it, and I do." In August of the same year she is at Spa, and writes to Mrs. Herbert of a "most excellent good repast" at Brussels in the early hours of the morning, after which "to be sure we all went drunk to bed."

And, indeed, though the Duchess's political sympathies and animosities were keen enough, her natural sphere was in the social world. Though in a sense she loved the retirement of the country, yet London, Bath, Tunbridge Wells, and other fashionable resorts attracted her also. At times, too, she must have indulged in the fashionable high play. For it appears by the *Newgate Calendar* (i. 305) that Francis Charteris, an aristocratic scamp, contrived to win £3,000 from her with the help of a mirror which showed him her cards. High rank graced by rare beauty is almost irresistible, and the Duchess used this combination for all that it was worth. Her beauty, indeed, had a narrow escape, for in 1728 she caught smallpox, but fortunately recovered without suffering any disfigurement. Mrs. Delany records a remarkable instance of the Duchess's proud confidence in her charms. At the Coronation of George II. she alone among the great dames "despised all adornments, nor had not one jewel, riband, or puff to set her off." The general opinion pronounced this experiment a failure, but it was quite like the Duchess to have made it. One of the strongest of her caprices was to be unlike other people, and she succeeded admirably in the attempt. Bolingbroke nicknamed her "Sa Singularité"; Horace Walpole, more bluntly, "the mad Duchess." This oddity was specially displayed in her dress, though she was not always *simplex munditiis*. Mrs. Delany, taking a feminine interest in these matters, has preserved the details of some decidedly showy costumes of the Duchess, and in particular of one which she wore in 1740 at a reception at Norfolk House, then rented by the Prince of Wales. "Her clothes," she says, "were white satin embroidered, the bottom of the petticoat *brown hills* covered with all sorts of weeds, and every breadth had an old stump of a tree that run (*sic*) up almost to the top of the petticoat, broken and ragged with brown chenille, round which twined nasturtians, ivy, honeysuckles, periwinkles, convolvuluses, and all sorts of twining flowers, which spread and covered the petticoat, vines with leaves variegated as you have seen them by the sun, all rather smaller than nature, which made them look

very light: the robings and facings were little green banks, with all sorts of weeds, and the sleeves and the rest of the gown loose twining branches of the same sort as those on her petticoat: many of the leaves were finished with gold, and part of the stumps of the trees looked like the gilding of the sun." She must have moved in majesty through this assembly like a gorgeous countryside: but, as a rule, her taste in dress led her to eccentricity rather than magnificence. In 1747, after a good deal of intriguing, she had obtained permission to appear again at Court; and in 1765 Horace Walpole tells Lord Hertford that she presented herself there in a gown and petticoat of red flannel. Making all allowance for male ignorance on such a subject, and Walpole's tendency to embroider a story, it is beyond doubt that she deliberately courted the peculiar in her costume. She was fond of wearing an apron, and appeared in one at Court after this garment had been forbidden at the Royal Drawing-rooms. Her entrance being opposed by one of the lords-in-waiting, she tore it off, threw it in his face and walked on. Beau Nash on a similar occasion took the law into his own hands. For when she attempted to enter the ballroom at Bath wearing an apron, he promptly stripped it off and threw it amongst the ladies' maids, observing that none but Abigails appeared in white aprons. It was her fancy as she grew older to disregard the changes of fashion and to adhere obstinately to the dress of her younger days. Whitehead paid a poetical tribute to this caprice. Reminding her that it was she

Who told him that the present source  
Of dress and each preposterous fashion,  
Flowed from supineness in the men,  
And not from female inclination.

That women were obliged to try  
All stratagems to catch the eye,  
And many a wild vagary play  
To gain attention any way:  
'Twas merely cunning in the fair—

he adds—

This may be true. But have a care ;  
Your Grace will contradict in part,  
Your own assertion and my song,  
Whose beauty, undisguised by art,  
Has charm'd so much and charm'd so long.

It was a pretty compliment, and by no means altogether untrue; but, as a matter of fact, ordinary people laughed at this vagary, and the Duchess was a little sore on the subject. She retaliated by pouring scorn, as Mrs. Delany tells us, on the fashionable "heads" and dress generally, declaring that ladies' shoebuckles were the only part of their costume to be looked at. In a letter to Swift, of November 10, 1733, she says: "If you have heard of my figure abroad, it is no more than I have done on both sides of my ears (as the saying is), for I did not cut and curl my hair like a sheep's head, or wear one of their trolloping sacks; and by so doing did give offence." Criticism, however, did not move her determination; and in the following year we find her writing to Mrs. Herbert from Spa (August 4, 1734), that the divers dresses of the procession and mob at Antwerp "made mine not in the least remarkable, though it was, is, and shall be just the same my Lord Pembroke laughed at so immoderately." In the same letter she further protests that "everybody's eye would strike them that my dress was exactly according to form, if their ears had not been (by some ill accident or other) used to hear it unjustly condemned." There is a good deal to be said in favour of the strength of mind which enables a lady to adhere to a costume which suits her, in disregard of the passing fashions. But it seems clear that the Duchess must have strayed much further than this from the beaten track. An attire which was merely old-fashioned would never have provoked so much active comment; but, in point of fact, it was sometimes so peculiar as to disguise her sex. For Lord Cornbury adds a mischievous postscript to the above letter, "She has been called 'Sir' upon the road above twenty times."

But the Duchess's wilfulness found more active outlets than mere eccentricity; and from one of her escapades it appears that she had in her the makings of a useful suffragette. The incident is narrated both by Mrs. Delany and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the account of the latter, as might be expected, being much the most spirited. In May, 1738, a warm debate was expected in the House of Lords. It was accordingly determined that ladies should be excluded and the Gallery reserved entirely for members of the House of Commons. "Notwithstanding which determination a tribe of dames resolved to show on this occasion that neither men nor laws could resist them." This heroic band was rather curiously constituted. Besides the Duchess of Queensberry, the Duchess of Ancaster, Lady Westmoreland, Lady Cobham, Lady Archibald Hamilton, Mrs. Scott, Mrs. Fortescue, and Lady Frances Saunderson, it included the sprightly but respectable Mrs. Pendarves (afterwards Mrs. Delany), Lady Charlotte Edwin, the converted sinner of fashion, and the saintly Lady Huntingdon, the amateur apostle of Methodism. At nine o'clock in the morning they presented themselves at the door, and were informed by Sir William Saunderson that the Chancellor had forbidden their admittance. "The Duchess of Queensberry, as head of the squadron, pushed at the ill-breeding of a mere lawyer, and desired him to let them upstairs privately. After some modest refusals, he swore by G—— he would not let them in. Her Grace, with a noble warmth, answered, by G—— they would come in, in spite of the Chancellor and the whole House." After this the battle began in earnest. The Lords tried to tire the ladies out, closed the doors, and ordered that no persons at all were to be admitted till the siege was raised. These dauntless women, however, remained at their post till five in the afternoon, "every now and then playing volleys of thumps, kicks, and raps against the door, with so much violence that the speakers in the House were scarce heard." These tactics failing, they had recourse to stratagem, and the "two Duchesses commanded a dead silence of half an hour." The Lords fell into the trap, and,

as the Commons were growing impatient, the doors were thrown open. In rushed the ladies, "pushed aside their competitors, and placed themselves in the front rows of the Gallery. They stayed there till after eleven, when the House rose; and during the debate gave applause, and showed marks of dislike, not only by smiles and winks (which have always been allowed in such cases), but by noisy laughs and apparent contempts; which is supposed the true reason why poor Lord Hervey spoke miserably."

This outbreak hardly calls for criticism, for indeed the tale points its own moral. But it shows how easily at that time decorum could be violated, even by those who were most concerned and best qualified to maintain it.

Meanwhile the Duke of Queensberry had gone over to the Opposition, and attached himself openly to the Prince of Wales. The Duchess also continued her political intrigues fitfully, and there are some rambling and mysterious letters of hers in 1736 and 1737 to Ann Pitt and others. To make the veil darker, Miss Pitt at one time took to writing in French, till she was unceremoniously pulled up by the Duchess. "Let me advise you," says the latter, "by all means to write in English, for, however much you are displeased at my abusing your French, I make no doubt of convincing you how much better you succeed in your own tongue." Sometimes these letters were conveyed privately by one Weber, "a trusty messenger," to escape inspection by the Post Office. The precaution was not unnecessary, for in those days letters of suspected persons were regularly opened by the Government. The correspondence of the period is full of allusions to this practice, and some writers, notably Lord Chesterfield, would often insert stinging sentences for the benefit of the officials who opened the letters. George Berkeley, writing to Lord Bolingbroke in 1734, remarks that one of Bolingbroke's letters was five days in reaching him, and adds: "I presume it was detained one post for the perusal of the Ministers; nor can I blame them; their fondness for reading all your compositions is doubtless the best proof that can be given of their good taste in polite reading."

Walpole's final overthrow in 1742 did not greatly affect the fortunes of the Queensberry family; but a few years later these were darkened by domestic calamities. In 1753 Lord Cornbury (who had then become Lord Hyde), to whom the Duchess was extremely attached, was killed in Paris by a fall from his horse. Eight months later he was followed to the grave by his father. In 1754 her eldest son, Lord Drumlanrig, shot himself accidentally with a pistol, leaving a widowed bride behind him. In the following year Lord Charles Douglas, her remaining son, narrowly escaped destruction in the Lisbon earthquake; but his fate was only deferred, for he died unmarried in 1756. And thus the Dukedom passed away from their line to William Douglas, third Earl of March (the notorious "Old Q" of later days), who succeeded to it in 1778, on the death of "Kitty's" husband. The Duchess felt the loss of her brother deeply, but she was prostrated with grief at the death of her eldest son. Overwhelmed by these misfortunes, she and the Duke retired to Amesbury, and for something like two years lived there in an almost complete seclusion from all their friends. Mrs. Delany, who is rather fond of pious reflections, observes in reference to Lord Hyde's death, that if it should give the Duchess "a serious and right way of thinking, the event, melancholy as it is, may prove a happiness to her; and as she *has good sense and many good qualities*, I hope she will make a proper use of this great chastisement." But hers was a nature not easily to be chastened; and though misfortunes did not sour her affections, they seem to have made her more reckless in her waywardness. Never too careful about giving offence to her friends, she seemed at times positively to go out of her way to flout them. Her entertainments had always been many and sumptuous. In addition to her dinner-parties, her balls and masquerades followed each other so quickly that Lady Westmoreland, writing to Lady Denbigh (February 9, 1748), describes her as having "encroached a good deal of late on Heidegger's province." Heidegger was manager of the Opera, but he also undertook the arrangement of private entertainments. She danced herself, up to the age of sixty-eight, at any rate,



as we know on the authority of Lady Mary Coke. The incident is worth recording. Lady Mary writes on August 25, 1768, that she had returned from a drive just as it grew dark "Half an hour after, in came the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, a Parson, and a small Thomas. She was in good humour, but a little comical. I told her I heard she had danced at Gunnersbury [the Princess Amelia's country house], and I was sorry I had not seen her; that I supposed I was in some of the other rooms at cards. 'You may see me now,' said her Grace, and with that she got up, and sang, and danced about the room." She was also very fond of private theatricals, and had a stage erected for this purpose in Queensberry House, Burlington Gardens, the site of which is now occupied by the Western Branch of the Bank of England. The performers were mostly relations, but the Duchess, though she stage-managed vigorously, did not act herself. But even in her earlier days her hospitalities were often disfigured with affronts. On one occasion, in 1745, she had sent an invitation to Lady Emily Lennox, which her mother, the Duchess of Richmond, was unable to answer at once. Whereupon, as Horace Walpole relates, "the Queensberry then sent word that she had made up her company, and desired to be excused from having Lady Emily's; but at the bottom of the card wrote, 'Too great a trust.'" We may perhaps detect an echo of the irritation caused by the Duchess's wayward hospitality in a letter of Pope's to Martha Blount, where he writes: "Pray ask the Duchess of Queensberry (if you can contrive to ask her without seeing her) what she means by forgetting you are as good a dancer as some she invites." Horace Walpole thus describes to Mann one of her masquerades in 1748: "The Duchess as mad as you remember her. She had stuck up notices about dancing, as you see at public bowling greens; turned half the company out at twelve; kept those she liked to supper; and, in short, contrived to do an agreeable thing in the rudest manner imaginable; besides having dressed her husband in Scotch plaid, which just now is one of the things in the world that is reckoned most offensive." The invasion of the Young Pretender in 1745

was still a sore memory, and less than a year before this masquerade an Act had been passed restraining the use of the Highland dress. Again, we hear from the same source how, in 1751, she had told Lady Di Egerton, a pretty daughter of the Duchess of Bridgewater, that she was going to give a ball for her. The ball was got up, but Lady Di was not invited. The girl's father-in-law sent the Duchess a hint, to which she replied with an offensive remark about his ineffectual "advertisement." Horace Walpole sends Lord Hertford the following account of a ball given by her in March, 1764: "Last Thursday the Duchess of Queensberry gave a ball, opened it herself with a minuet, and danced two country dances; as she had enjoined everybody to be with her by six, to sup at twelve, and go away directly. Of the Campbell sisters all were left out but Lady Strafford. Lady Rockingham and Lady Sondes, who, having had colds, deferred sending answers, received notice that their places were filled up, and that they must not come, but were pardoned on submission. A card was sent to invite Lord and Lady Cardigan, and Lord Beaulieu, instead of Lord Montagu.\* This, her Grace protested, was an accident. Lady Cardigan was very angry, and yet went. Except these few flights, the only extraordinary thing the Duchess did was to do nothing extraordinary, for I do not call it very mad that some pique happening between her and the Duchess of Bedford, the latter had this distich sent to her—

Come with a whistle, and come with a call,  
Come with a good will, or come not at all.

I do not know whether what I am going to tell you did not border a little upon Moorfields. The gallery where they danced was very cold. Lord Lorn, George Selwyn, and I retired into a little room, and sat comfortably by the fire. The Duchess looked in, said nothing, and sent a smith to take the hinges of the door off. We understood the hint, and left the room, and so did the smith the door. This was pretty legible." Even the costumes of her guests were

\* Lord Montagu was Lord Cardigan's eldest son; Lord Beaulieu was the husband of Lady Cardigan's sister, with whom she had quarrelled.

subjected to the Duchess's imperious caprice. Writing on March 9, 1769, Lady Mary Coke says: "The Duchess of Queensberry is to give a ball on Saturday to Mr. Douglass. She invited me, but said she would not have a bone [meaning she admitted no hoops] not even in her chick-ings. They were, she said, to be boned before they came to table."

Towards the end of her life she made a strange pet of a negro page boy, in whom she detected, or fancied that she detected, exceptional abilities. Lady Mary Coke writes on March 30, 1767: "Made a visit to Duchess of Queensberry, and found her half dressed and half undressed. She was talking to her Black Boy, who indeed seemed to have a very extraordinary capacity, something very uncommon. She told me she had him taught everything he had a mind to learn. She thought it better than keeping him to serve at the house; in that I think her Grace judged right, but when she told me he learnt to ride and fence I could not help thinking these exercises too much above his condition to be useful, and would only serve to give him expectations that could not be answered." She was indeed no respecter of persons, and cared little enough what she said, or to whom she said it. Her broad remonstrance to the Dean of Lincoln on the inadequate arrangements of his dinner-party is recorded by Horace Walpole in a letter to Lady Ossory (June 25, 1776), but can hardly be repeated here. In the famous Hamilton-Douglas case, which engrossed the attention of society for nearly seven years, the Duchess's sympathies were naturally on the Douglas side. After the House of Lords, in 1769, had decided in favour of Archibald Steuart, the triumphant Duchess of Douglas went to the theatre with a large contingent of friends, including the Duchess of Queensberry. They were cheered by the audience, and the Duchess of Douglas responded by rising and curtsying. But the dropping of curtsies continued so long that the Duchess of Queensberry grew irritated, and shouted out peremptorily, "Sit down, Peg!" Horace Walpole tells Mary Berry how a Mr. Fitzpatrick driving in a high chaise nearly upset the Duchess, who was on horse-

back. She promptly called out, "Oh, pray, Mr. *Kill-patrick*, don't ride over me!"

Moreover, she carried into social matters not only personal caprice, but political prejudice. We learn from a private letter that in 1740 the Duke of Queensberry and some others organised a set of subscription dances at Heidegger's rooms. On the day before the first of these the Duchess wrote to Lord Conway desiring him to send word to Sir Robert Walpole to keep away, otherwise neither she nor any of her friends would come. Lord Conway politely declined to accede to this request; whereupon the Duchess returned to the charge, offering on her part to keep Pulteney away; but Lord Conway remained obdurate. Finally she came with an ill grace, and "took care to show it was so much a *contre-cœur* as to cast a cloud on the whole assembly." In consequence of this disagreeable incident most of the subscribers withdrew their names.

It is easy to understand the irritation which unmannerly conduct like this would arouse, and yet the charm of the woman seemed to carry her through it all. Horace Walpole, who detested anything outrageous, thanked Heaven fervently that at Strawberry Hill the Thames was between him and the Duchess of Queensberry. But however severely he might criticise her behaviour, he always had the liveliest admiration for her beauty. At a dinner at Lord Guilford's in 1772 he drank to the Duchess, adding by way of a toast that he "wish'd she might live to grow ugly." "I hope, then, you will keep your taste for antiquities," was the ready reply. Indeed, her power of captivation was an appreciable asset of the Bolingbroke party. The elder Pitt, who joined the Patriots in 1735, when he was twenty-seven, seems to have been a good deal under her influence. Horace Walpole in 1746 speaks of Pitt's caprices being "in excellent training; for he is governed by her mad Grace of Queensberry." A year later we hear that Pitt was not present at the reading of the Bill for taking away the heritable jurisdictions in Scotland, "the Duchess of Queensberry having ordered him to have gout."

By the time George III. came to be crowned she was sixty-one; yet in the Coronation procession—as Horace tells us—she still “looked well, though her locks milk-white.” Mrs. Delany writes to Mrs. Port: “I am, thank God, well in health, and put as good a face upon y<sup>e</sup> matter as age and wrinkles will allow, tho’ not so beautiful, young and blooming as my contemporary, the Duchess of Queensbury.” This was in April, 1776, and on July 20, 1777, the Duchess was dead. Her death was strange as her life, for she died of a surfeit of cherries at the age of seventy-seven, and retaining to the end her extraordinary beauty. Two years after her death Horace Walpole writes to Lady Ossory: “Lady Jane Scott has found in a cabinet at Ham a most enchanting picture by Zincke of the Duchess of Queensberry, which the Duke always carried in his pocket.\* It is as simple as my Cowley, in white with hairs all flowing, and beautiful as the Hours in Guido’s ‘Aurora,’ and very like her to the last moment.”

In viewing her life as a whole, her eccentricities of course stand out prominently; but it would be a mistake to suppose that she was nothing but an intellectual crank or a social madcap. At the same time it is supremely difficult to arrive at a compact appreciation of her character. The most contradictory opinions passed current about her, and, strange as it may seem, they were all true. For her conflicting characteristics did not modify each other, but co-existed unchanged in a perpetual antagonism. She had many excellent qualities of head and heart. She was a blameless wife, a devoted mother, an affectionate sister, and, where she gave her friendship, a loyal and loving friend. Swift’s letters on the death of Gay are incredibly cold. “I would endeavour to comfort myself,” he writes to Pope, “upon the loss of friends as I do upon the loss of money; by turning to my account book and seeing whether I have enough left for my support.” The warm-hearted Duchess, to whom the letter was shown, utterly repudiates this frigid view. “I differ with you, that it is possible to comfort oneself for the loss of friends as one does upon the

\* The Duke died on October 20, 1778.

loss of money. I think I could live on very little nor think myself poor, or be thought so; but a little friendship could never satisfy me; and I could never expect to find such another support as my poor friend. In almost everything but friends, another of the same name may do as well; but friend is more than a name if it be anything."

Her tender care of Gay and her devotion to the blind old Lady Lichfield show that this was not mere lip-service at friendship's shrine. And, moreover, we learn incidentally that she nursed Mrs. Delany through a troublesome illness, preparing "tisans and balsamic draughts" for the patient with her own hands. Her native faults were aggravated by her environment, which allowed them to run riot; but had they been subjected to a wholesome control, freer play would have been given to the better elements of her character. *Imperium, nisi imperasset, comparasset.* She might have won a worthier reputation in a humbler sphere, whose conditions would have taught her to obey before she essayed to command. But the greatness of her position, and the homage paid to her beauty, were a bad discipline for a nature like hers. Had she been duly schooled by criticism and reproof, instead of being pampered by wholesale adulation, the vigour which went to emphasize her defects might well have given strength and stability to her virtues. For with all her pride, her intolerance, and her self-will, she had a sensitive and sympathetic nature. Often enough she showed scanty consideration for her friends, but none the less she winced under their reproaches. "I, who can be as much wrong as any mortal creature without exception, cannot by any means bear to be under that reproach when I am not so. Upon my word and honour I did write to you as soon (save one post) as I was able. Upon ditto, I am vastly obliged to you, and have, at this moment, more mind to write a whole book to you than I have to do any other thing." This was to Miss Pitt in September, 1737. Lady Suffolk, too, writes bitterly to Gay in a moment of resentment: "I suppose she always uses those worst who love her best." The particulars of the quarrel are not forthcoming; but it ended in some humbly apologetic letters

from the Duchess. She owns also to some feminine fears which she nevertheless tries to conquer. She forces herself to ride, but she is a nervous horsewoman. "I am very happy when once out, but neither Gouppy \* or I can bear the thoughts of my setting out." And again we hear that she designs to go hunting, because, as she tells Miss Pitt, "I was so frightened at the very sight of the hounds at above a mile's distance this morning, that it was so ridiculously uneasy to me that I am determined to get the better of my foolish fears." And always in wait for her were her headaches, under which she would at times break down completely, even in the middle of a letter. Her flatterers were a servile tribe, who frequently reviled her behind her back. Lady Suffolk remarks to Gay, "I am much more her humble servant than those who tell her so every day." Pope, who often deserved Atterbury's bitter description of him—"Mens curva in corpore curvo"—could not, in spite of his outward friendship with the Duchess, resist launching a spiteful epigram—anonymously—at her :—

Did Cœlia's person and her sense agree,  
What mortal could behold her and be free?  
But nature has in pity to mankind  
Enrich't the image and debas't the mind.

The sneer was not only spiteful, but untrue. The Duchess's intellect was not of the first order, but it was bright and alert, and not in the least debased. Young, of the *Night Thoughts*, was another of her humble servants—to her face. Behind her back he writes to the Duchess of Portland: "The Duchess is, as your Grace says, very entertaining, and so are all oddities: peevishness and pride are in their own nature the most ridiculous things in the world, and therefore must be extremely entertaining to such as only see, not suffer, from them. If Mr. Foot would take her Grace well off, you would find her much more entertaining still." Ungenerous as these remarks were in the mouth of a professed friend, it is impossible to deny that there was some ground for them. Lady Suffolk repeatedly declared,

\* A French artist.

and Gay echoes the comment, that the Duchess thought better of herself than of anybody else. This was not only true in itself, but it was the true explanation of much that was least amiable in her character. For her self-esteem did not rest on a dignified appreciation of her own powers, but in the extravagant assumptions of an untamed arrogance. Yet we cannot withhold some sympathy for a character which, with so many lovable qualities, yet failed to attract much love, and a life which, surrounded by all the conditions of success, yet ended more or less in failure. There is a quaint summary of her by the Dowager Countess of Gower in a letter to Mrs. Delany, informing her of the Duchess's death. "Her Grace of Queensberry departed last ffriday morn. I sent to know if report said true; y<sup>e</sup> serv<sup>t</sup>. confirmed it, y<sup>t</sup> after five days' illness she was just dead of a complaint on her breast. There went a soul of whim! but *no life of pleasure!* for tho' all at home was at her devotion, she never seem'd to be sensible of y<sup>e</sup> happiness, from her own disposition. An extensive triffling genius, innumerable plans, all productive of disapointm<sup>ts</sup>." This is certainly the impression which her career leaves upon us: a career lit up by many bright spots, and darkened less by positive misdeeds than by failures, the failures of an "extensive" genius which frittered itself away in trifling pursuits. A pettier character than hers might have emerged unscathed, but for her large nature this misdirected energy brought an inexorable penalty of weariness and ennui. And as we take leave of her, we cannot but feel that if there is much in her life to condemn, there is also much to admire, and perhaps still more to pity.



## VI. A LADY WIT

### (LADY TOWNSHEND)

THE deliberate and often laborious cultivation of wit which was so conspicuous a strand in the motley web of eighteenth century society seems a strange enough ambition to modern ideas. The professional wit, if he still exists at all, is regarded rather as a professional bore. Much of Selwyn's humour, which delighted his contemporaries, including even the fastidious Horace Walpole, would only provoke a groan in a modern music-hall; and a good deal of Charles Townshend's and even of Lord Chesterfield's wit would share the same fate. It was mainly, however, a masculine affectation in which the ladies of the period hardly took any part. There is plenty of fun in the breezy letters of Mrs. Campbell (*née* Bellenden), the saucy Maid of Honour who flirted and frolicked with beautiful Molly Lepell (afterwards Lady Hervey) and affectionately teased the long-suffering Mrs. Howard. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's humour is quite as racy, if somewhat more sedate; and many of Mrs. Montagu's earlier letters are bright with a pretty if rather a pert wit. But as a rule feminine wit was reserved for private letters, for the small and informal *salons* which were occasionally held by the Duchess of Queensberry, Lady Hervey, and one or two other great ladies, and in later days for the Blue-stocking assemblies. It seldom became public property, caught up and passed on by one hearer to another, and weighed, criticised, and appraised by all.

To this rule, however, there was a notable exception in the brilliant and beautiful scapegrace, Lady Townshend. Audrey—or, as she used to style herself, Etheldreda—was the only daughter of Edward Harrison, of Balls Park,

Hertfordshire. He had been one of Thomas Pitt's successors as Governor at Fort St. George, and left a large fortune, which his daughter inherited. She was born in 1701, and married on May 29, 1723, to Charles, third Viscount Townshend, whose father, in 1713, had married, as a second wife, Dorothy, sister of Sir Robert Walpole. The political animosity which afterwards (in 1728) broke out between Sir Robert and his brother-in-law did not seem to interfere with the relations between Sir Robert's son Horace and the later generation of Townshends. It is to this circumstance that we owe a good deal of the rather scanty records which remain of the once famous Lady Townshend, who was quite intimate with Horace, though she had an implacable dislike to his father's circle.

As was the case with so many social celebrities of that period, her reputation has come down to us without its history.

Long and well-known to public fame,  
For gallantry and wit,

is the description given of her by a contemporary rhymester. But what everybody knew nobody seems to have taken the trouble to preserve; and thus her caprices and extravagances, like the wit of Gilly Williams or the conversational brilliance of Fitzpatrick, survive as little more than an elusive tradition. Almost all that is substantial about her wit is preserved in the letters of Horace Walpole. His intimacy with her, though close, was not based on any sincere affection, a circumstance which in some ways makes his testimony more valuable. For he was by no means blind to her failings, and is often rather ungenerously free in alluding to them. She had a bitter and none too truthful tongue. Truth, indeed, as Horace wrote to Lord Hertford, was not "the staple commodity of that family." Elsewhere he illustrates this failing by a story which he writes to Conway on July 21, 1758, of the christening of Lady Dalkeith's child. "The child had *three* godfathers: and I will tell you why: they had thought of the Duke of Newcastle, my Lord [Townshend] and George Townshend:



“ETHELDREDA,” 3RD VISCOUNTESS TOWNSHEND.



but of two Townshends and his Grace, God could not take the word of any two, so all three were forced to be bound."

Lady Townshend was not happy in her married life, and she lived apart from her husband for many years before his death. She certainly was not a model wife, but he seems to have been by no means a desirable husband, and he ended a career of sordid disrepute in the toils of the housemaid whom he took for his mistress. Naturally he was not spared by Etheldreda's sharp tongue; and on hearing him give his vote against the rebel Scottish peers in the usual form, "Guilty upon my honour," she observed, "I always knew my lord was guilty, but I never thought he would own it upon his honour."

Two portraits of her are preserved in contemporary fiction. She was said to be Lady Bellaston in *Tom Jones*, and she is certainly Lady Tempest in *Pompey the Little*. The anonymous author\* of the latter protests that no character in the book is meant for any particular person, but this need only be taken as an official *dementi*. It carried no conviction at any rate to the society of the day, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu declares without hesitation that in Lady Tempest she recognises Lady Townshend. *Pompey the Little* is the imaginary story of a lap-dog, and the author, speaking of Lady Tempest, says: "What gives her a place in this history is her fondness for dogs, which from her childhood she had loved exceedingly . . . and now kept six or eight various kinds in her house." Perhaps, therefore, we may conclude that this was a taste of the real Lady Townshend. Another and more refined taste is hinted at by Hanbury Williams in his poem *Isabella*. Here the Duchess of Manchester is made to exclaim in reference to a Staffordshire teapot:—

And that old Pagog, and that charming child!  
If Lady Townshend saw them, she'd be wild.

Lady Bellaston is a coarser picture altogether, and may be left to speak for itself.

\* It appears to have been written by a curate named Francis Coventry.

Two at least of Lady Townshend's sons inherited her abilities, the famous Charles Townshend and George, who subsequently became the first Marquis. She was very fond of Charles, and was overwhelmed with grief at his death. And this sacred sorrow seems to have brought to the front the nobler elements of her nature. For, as Lady Mary Coke tells us, amid her own distress, she omitted no attention or kindness to his widow. Fitzgerald says that George was heartily disliked by both his parents, but Horace Walpole consistently represents him as his mother's favourite, and observes, in his *Memoirs of George the Second*, that he was completely governed by her. His relations, the Pelhams, with the view of removing him from her influence, obtained employment for him under the Duke of Cumberland, who showed him considerable favour. In 1744 he was given a captaincy in the 7th Dragoons, and served under the Duke at Culloden. Lady Townshend, however, had been slighted by the Duke and was not at all disposed to overlook the affront. She became a violent Jacobite, "and employed all her wit and malice, the latter of which without any derogation to the former had vastly the ascendant, to propagate the Duke's unpopularity." Moreover, she succeeded in creating differences between the Duke and her son, and the latter about 1750 threw up his commission. An incident arising out of this showed that he possessed his mother's neatness in repartee. He was observed at a review by Colonel Fitzwilliam, one of the Duke's military spies. "How come you, Mr. Townshend, to do us this honour?" he inquired, adding, "But I suppose you only come as a spectator?" "And why may not one come hither as a *Spectator*, sir, as well as a *Tatler*?" was Townshend's prompt reply. He also gained a considerable reputation with his pencil, being a clever and audacious caricaturist.\* He served under Wolfe in Canada as second in command, and on Wolfe's death received the surrender

\* Oh! Townshend, could my hand, like thine,  
 Command the comic pencil's line,  
 Yon groups would well befriend me.

*New Foundling Hospital of Wit*, ii. 120.

of Quebec, much to his mother's satisfaction. Walpole was rather spiteful about this, and ridiculed Lady Townshend posing as a modern *Mater Gracchorum*. Writing to Lord Strafford on October 30, 1759, he remarks: "My ignorance of all the circumstances relating to Quebec is prodigious; I have contented myself with the rays of glory that have reached hither [Strawberry Hill], without going to London to bask in them. I have not even seen the conqueror's mother, though I hear she has covered herself with more laurel leaves than were heaped on the children in the wood."

Mother and sons seem to have sharpened their wits on each other. "I passed this whole morning," says Walpole, in a letter of September 13, 1759, to Conway, "most deliciously at my Lady T.'s. Poor Roger,\* for whom she is not concerned, has given her a hint that her hero George may be mortal too; she scarce spoke unless to improve on some bitter thing that Charles said, who was admirable." It was, perhaps, from this intellectual skirmishing that her humour often resembled in form the masculine wit of the day. Puns, sometimes indescribably bad, and every kind of play upon words were in high favour. According to Lord Chesterfield, wit of this sorry kind ranked as a social accomplishment, and even the learned Miss Carter produced a ponderous piece of humour called *The Whole Art and Mystery of Punning*. A *bon mot* in this style of Lady Townshend's is said to have been much admired by the late Mr. Gladstone. The conversation had turned on Methodism, and somebody said to Lady Townshend, "Pray, madam, is it true that Wesley has recanted?" "No, sir," she replied, "he has only canted." But she could rise to higher flights than this, and according to Walpole was, in point of wit, considerably above the level of her age. He writes to George Montagu, on July 13, 1745, deploring the deserted condition of London. "Wit and beauty," he adds, "indeed remain in the persons of Lady Townshend and Lady Caroline Fitzroy—but such is the want of taste of this age, that the

\* Her fourth son, who was killed at Ticonderoga on July 7, 1759.

former is very often forced to wrap up her wit in plain English before it can be understood." Lady Mary Coke observes that "one never fails of being entertain'd or of hearing news with Lady Townshend." Indeed, both she and Horace Walpole were indefatigable gossips, and their interchange of social tittle-tattle formed the ground of a sort of commercial alliance which proved a tolerable substitute for genuine friendship. After Horace had acquired Strawberry Hill, in 1747, Etheldreda was duly trotted over to see the new toy. Her first criticism—clenched by an ejaculation of startling profanity—was that it was "just such a house as a parson's, where the children sleep at the feet of the bed"; but later on she relented, and remarked that "it would be a very pleasant place if Mrs. Clive's face did not rise upon it and make it so hot." Horace had installed his old friend Kitty Clive in a small house adjoining the Strawberry Hill property, which he called "Little Strawberry," or sometimes "Clive-den," or "Clive's den." Lady Townshend's caustic remark calls up a suggestive picture of the famous actress in middle age, rosy, warm-hearted, and plump. Some three years later she was greatly delighted by a legacy of £50 from Lord Radnor. Walpole, in a letter to Mann of July 26, 1757, says: "You never saw anything so droll as Mrs. Clive's countenance, between the heat of the summer, the pride in her legacy, and the efforts to appear unconcerned." Her private life was without reproach, but this unflattering description of her appearance tends incidentally to dispose of a scandalous suggestion, put forward by the irrepressible Pinkerton, that she was Walpole's *chère amie*.

On the occasion of the marriage, in 1759, of the beautiful Maria Walpole, second daughter of Horace's brother Edward, to Lord Waldegrave, we find Lady Townshend superintending Horace's wedding garments. She had been strongly opposed to the match, and he had artfully appeased her by asking her to undertake this responsibility. "She has chosen me," he writes piteously to George Montagu, "a white ground with purple and green flowers." This was rather a shock to Horace, whose usual attire was carefully



unobtrusive.\* “I represented,” he adds, “that, however young my spirits may be, my bloom is rather past; but the moment I declared against juvenile colours, I found it was determined I should have nothing else—so be it!”

As a rule, however, he was content to watch, with a certain malicious amusement, the escapades of her impetuous career. Into her various love affairs it is neither necessary nor easy to enter. They were certainly numerous, perhaps very numerous, if some rather coarse lines which Walpole wrote on the back of her portrait are to be trusted. But stories quickly gather round a character like hers, and it is not easy to separate fact from fiction. Walpole could not always resist a sly dig at her frailties. She told him once that she had seen at the theatre “a new fat player, who looked like everybody’s husband.” “I can easily believe that,” replied he, “from seeing so many women who look like everybody’s wives.” She had a *tendresse*, at any rate, for the handsome Lord Frederick Campbell, whose father wrote to her, playfully, that she had spoilt his son. Winnington was one of her most notorious lovers, and the amour is chronicled by Hanbury Williams in his paraphrase of *Donec gratus eram tibi*, &c. (Hor. *Carm.*, Lib. iii. 9). And rumour ascribed the same distinction to the poet himself, or to his namesake, Gilly Williams:—

With Williams, Winnington, it seems  
A merry life she led.

*New Foundling Hospital for Wit*, iv. 188.

There is a yet stranger, though perhaps untrustworthy, story of an intrigue with one William Parsons, a handsome scoundrel of good birth, who was hanged for highway robbery in February, 1750. It is told in what was practically his dying confession, and though the lady’s name is only given as Lady *Frail*, it seems probable that the story, whether true or not, relates to Lady Townshend. Parsons says that he received an invitation to meet an unknown

\* His summer costume was “a lavender suit, the waistcoat embroidered with a little silver, or of white silk, worked in the tambour, partridge silk stockings, and gold buckles, ruffles and frill, generally lace.”

lady calling herself Clarinda, which he accepted. The interview, however, took place in a dark room, and the lady firmly refused to disclose her identity. But on a subsequent occasion he contrived surreptitiously to obtain a sight of her face, which he immediately recognised. He then found an opportunity of stealing her snuff-box, and on the following day, seeing her with some others in the Park, "he made up to her, and with a low bow, showing her the snuff-box, asked her if she knew whose it was. 'Yes,' said she; 'and if I may be allowed to guess the lady's sentiments to whom it belongs, you must keep it as the *last favour* you must *ever* expect from her.'"

Embittered, perhaps, by her own experiences, she regarded matrimony with a scornful cynicism. The best cure for a wife's illness, she said, was the death of her husband: and Walpole writes (March 17, 1743) to tell Mann that "my Lady Townshend has been to see the Hermaphrodite, and says it is the only happy couple she ever saw." She made no secret of her likes and dislikes, proclaiming each with a fearless disregard of conventions. She could not endure her brother-in-law, Augustus Townshend, and made no attempt to conceal her indifference to his death in 1746. She did indeed go into formal mourning, and one evening after the opera, on pulling off her black gloves, she found that they had stained her hands. She promptly rapped out, "My hands are guilty, but my heart is free." She had some vigorous aristocratic prejudices which the circumstances of the time enabled her to display freely. About the middle of the eighteenth century a good deal of new blood was admitted into the peerage, not greatly to the satisfaction of some of the existing aristocracy. Lady Townshend declared that so many brewers and poulterers had been ennobled that she expected every day to receive a bill from her fishmonger signed "Lord Mountshrimp." Mrs. Scott, sister to the famous Mrs. Montagu, testifies to the same effect. Writing to her brother in June, 1762, she says: "You will find few commoners in England. We make nobility as fast as people make Kings and Queens on Twelfth Night, and almost as many. Lady Townshend says

he dare not spit out of her window for fear of spitting on a lord." George Selwyn, writing to Lord Carlisle (February 26, 1768), remarks that "the King is grown veryaverse to promotions of that kind; it is high time to be a little chaste upon that point. In Ireland it is infamous, and the more so, because that Riff Raff, with titles resembling our own, desires to be confounded with the nobility of this country, and very often are so." Somebody at Lady Townshend's hearing expressed surprise that Lady Northumberland should have been made a Lady of the Bedchamber. She replied, "Surely nothing could be more proper. The Queen does not understand English, and can nothing be more necessary than that she should learn the vulgar tongue?" Lady Northumberland may actually have been peculiar in speech or manners, for in a burlesque account of the characters in a masquerade at the notorious Mrs. Cornely's she is made to appear as an "ale-wife." Not even Royalty escaped her sarcasm. George the Second cared little for England, his affection being strictly proportioned to the money which he could extract from the country. Dodington, alluding to his stinginess, said that "he would not for the world lend himself a farthing." But his family preferred the wider and more amusing life of London to the sombre recreations of the Hanoverian Court, and were fond of appearing at public entertainments. Etheldreda summed up the situation in her own racy fashion: "This is the cheapest family to see and the dearest to keep that ever was."

Though the fragments of her wit which have come down to us are not many, its quality impressed Horace Walpole sufficiently to inspire a poetical eulogy from the Strawberry Press. The verses are rather frigid, but their praise is probably genuine, as he used to make a favour of this particular form of compliment. The Press itself is supposed to speak:—

From me wits and poets their glory obtain;  
Without me their wit and their verses were vain.  
Stop, Townshend, and let me but *print* what you say;  
You, the fame I on others bestow, will repay.

He liked to be amused, and her wit and brilliant audacity amused him: but when these began to fail in ill-health his interest flagged. However, while the evil days came not she certainly lived her life. We hear of her at Bath and Tunbridge, and other fashionable resorts. Lord Bath, in an epigram somewhat too broad to be quoted in full, records that at Bath—

Physick each morn is Townshend's care,  
Each night she plays a pool.

And Tunbridge was the scene of one of her audacious pranks, more fully recounted later on.

In 1738 we hear through Lady Mary Wortley Montagu that "Lord Townshend is spitting up his lungs at the Gravel-pits [Kensington], and his charming lady diverting herself with daily rambles in town. She has made a new friendship which is very delightful: I mean with Madame Pulteney, and they hunt in couples from tea drinking till midnight."

If the Madame Pulteney here mentioned was the wife of the famous William Pulteney who was made Earl of Bath on July 13, 1742, they certainly seem rather a strangely assorted couple, for Lady Townshend, in her way, was a great lady. But their common dislike of Sir Robert Walpole may have been a bond of sympathy. Pulteney had married in 1714 Anna Maria, the daughter of John Gumley, of Isleworth, who brought him both beauty and wealth; but she is rather severely handled by contemporary writers. Hervey describes her in his *Memoirs of George the Second* (i. 9) as "a weak woman with all the faults of a bad man, of low birth, a lower mind, and the lowest manners, and without any one good agreeable or amiable quality but beauty." Hanbury Williams also girds at her viciously, calling her "Pulteney's vixen" and "Bath's ennobled doxy"; but, like Hervey, he belonged to Sir Robert Walpole's party, and political animosity may have coloured the judgment of them both. She certainly must have possessed a good business head, as she succeeded in turning £10,000 which her husband gave her soon after her marriage into

£60,000 by judicious investments. She was indeed accused of being avaricious—an accusation which points to the same conclusion and for which there seems some ground. For Miss Carter, after singing Lord Bath's praises, adds that he was not quite so liberal with money as he might have been, but that this was due to his wife (*Memoirs*, i. 239). The "wife of Bath," moreover, as Horace Walpole used to call her, had a tongue and could use it; and though he declares that she got pickings out of the preferments bestowed by her husband, he admits that with "an infernal temper" she had a great deal of wit. Lord Bath admonished her while in one of her passions to keep her temper. "Keep my temper!" she replied. "I don't like it so well; I wonder you should." Later on, in 1743, Lady Townshend made rather a happy repartee to Lord Bath. After the overthrow of Sir Robert Walpole in the February of that year Pulteney seems to have lost his head, and in an evil moment he accepted the peerage which speedily brought about his political extinction. When he realised his mistake he was so furious that he is said to have dashed his patent to the ground in a rage. A few months earlier his great rival had taken the same step, but in his case it was a retreat from an assembly where he could no longer command. As Lord Orford he was keenly alive to the error which Pulteney had committed in being "kicked upstairs," and on meeting him in the House of Lords he observed with mock politeness, "Here we are, my lord, the two most insignificant men in the kingdom." This was substantially true of Lord Bath, at any rate, and accordingly, when he complained in Lady Townshend's presence of a pain in his side, she replied, "Oh, my lord, that can't be; you have no side!"

But before this the bondage of an uncongenial marriage had become insufferable to Lady Townshend and her husband, and early in March, 1741, they agreed to live separately. From this point Lord Townshend, who was never a conspicuous figure in society, practically disappears from notice till his death in 1764 set the tongues of the gossips wagging once more. Etheldreda, however, con-

tinued her eccentric career with unabated ardour, plunging into all the fashionable diversions of the day. The opera at that time was rather a tender exotic which never struck root deeply into the national taste. There is no reason to suppose that Lady Townshend was musical, and Horace Walpole, though at one time a Director of the Opera, openly confessed that he was not. But, while it was the fashion to attend the opera, fashionable folk did their duty religiously and also amused themselves by patronising the operatic singers. Accordingly we hear of Walpole taking two of these—Monticelli and Farinelli—to an entertainment at Lady Townshend's in November, 1741. However, in the following year an amusement was provided which was more congenial to the tastes of them both. On May 24, 1742, Ranelagh was opened in the neighbourhood of the present Chelsea Hospital and at once became the rage. Lord Chesterfield was so fond of it that he declared he had ordered his letters to be addressed there; and Walpole, too, was a constant and enthusiastic visitor. According to him, "Nobody goes anywhere else—everybody goes there. You can't set your foot without treading on a Prince of Wales or a Duke of Cumberland. The company is universal: there is from his Grace of Grafton down to children out of the Foundling Hospital—from my Lady Townshend to the Kitten."

The Kitten may possibly be Kitty Fisher, a well-known courtesan of the period, whose portrait was painted more than once by Sir Joshua Reynolds. London, indeed, took kindly to its new pleasure haunt, which soon became the nightly scene of masquerades, concerts, supper parties, and so forth. Three years later the rebellion of 1745 fell like a thunderbolt in the midst of these junketings, and for the moment there was almost a panic in London. The rapid and victorious advance of the Young Pretender to the very heart of England, the fears of his followers which stayed his hand when success seemed almost within his grasp, the disheartened retreat from Derby, and the final collapse of the rebellion at Culloden, are matters of history which need not detain us here. Lady Townshend, however, contributed a

chapter of her own to the later story of this ill-fated movement. After the insurrection had been suppressed, the Scottish lords who had abetted it were brought up for trial at the House of Lords, and Lady Townshend, always eager for a sight, took care to be present. It must have been a profoundly impressive spectacle. Horace Walpole writes to Mann on August 1, 1746 : " I am at this moment come from the conclusion of the greatest and most melancholy scene I ever yet saw ! You will easily guess it was the trial of the rebel Lords." Among the arraigned noblemen was Lord Kilmarnock, a man " with four earldoms in him," yet so poor as often to want a dinner. In the prime of life, but looking young for his age, tall, slender, and " with an extreme fine person " set off by a certain fastidious grace of dress, he bore his misfortunes with a composure which lost none of its dignity from the tinge of submission with which it was tempered. Lady Townshend was immediately attracted, and, in particular, " being smit with his falling shoulders," fell violently in love with him. She would watch under his window, she sent him messages of affection, and contrived to obtain from him in return his dog and his snuff-box. As the hopes of his pardon grew fainter, she turned fiercely on her loyal countrymen, railing at their bloodthirstiness and forswearing their company. Walpole, writing to Mann on August 21, 1746, three days after Kilmarnock's execution, says : " My Lady Townshend, who fell in love with Lord Kilmarnock at his trial, will go nowhere to dinner, for fear of meeting rebel-pie ; she says everybody is so bloody-minded that they eat rebels." But her strangest fancy was making Lord Hervey promise not to sleep a whole night for Kilmarnock's sake, " and in return," added she, " never trust me if I am not as yellow as a jonquil for him." If Lord Hervey's promise was kept, it is certainly a remarkable testimony to the fascination which this beautiful and unruly woman could exercise over men. A less promising subject for such an experiment than the cold and cynical Hervey can hardly be imagined, and the fact that she attempted it shows at any rate that she had full faith in her own powers. George Selwyn had

been dining with her on August 15, 1746, and, not thinking her passion entirely serious, talked rather lightly of the impending execution. She burst into a tempest of tears and rage, and hurling reproaches at him, dashed upstairs to her room. Selwyn's procedure was highly characteristic. He calmly sent for her maid to finish the bottle with him, and discussed with her the somewhat remote probability of Lady Townshend's permitting her to go and witness the execution. This passion of Lady Townshend's has been described as theatrical, and its extravagances certainly give some colour to the charge. But its roots seem to have struck deeper than was supposed by her contemporaries, who were too accustomed to the waywardness of her fancy to credit her with anything like a genuine affection. It is certain, however, that she cherished Kilmarnock's memory after his death, for in 1747 we hear of her taking into her service a little stable-boy whom she had picked up in the Tower, and whom the Warders, according to Walpole, had persuaded her was a natural son of her dead love. She did not, however, mourn for ever, and the old giddy life was gradually resumed. Several times we hear of her giving magnificent balls; and though it has been suggested by a recent writer that the company may not have been very select, such evidence as there is gives no support to the suggestion. Nor is it at all likely that a blot of this kind would have escaped the pungent pen of Horace Walpole. It is, indeed, one of the remarkable features of her career that her wild life did not seem to bring her any serious social discredit.

When George the Third was crowned, in September, 1761, Walpole took her to see the sight from the house of Charles Bedford, his deputy at the Exchequer. And he tells this further tale: "My Lady Townshend said she should be very glad to see a coronation, as she had never seen one. 'Why,' said I, 'madam, you walked at the last?' 'Yes, child,' said she, 'but I saw nothing of it: I only looked to see who looked at me.'" But a sight of any kind would attract her. Thus, in August, 1777, we find George Selwyn arranging for her to get a parting glimpse of the Chevalier



d'Eon, before the departure of the latter to France. At that time this remarkable person was female, Selwyn observing, "she is now in *habit de femme*, in black silk and diamonds, which she received from the Empress of Russia, when she was in the army, and at her Court as Minister." The Chevalier was certainly a person worth seeing, for a stranger story never was told. Coming over in 1762 as secretary to the Duc de Nivernais on his embassy to settle the preliminaries of the peace which was ultimately concluded at Fontainebleau, D'Eon, after the departure of the Ambassador, was left practically in charge of the French mission. Meanwhile he was secretly engaged, under the instructions of Louis XV., in preparing a plan for the invasion of England. M. de Guerchy was subsequently sent to take over the reins, but D'Eon then insisted on retaining some of the embassy papers, which he declared he would only hand over on express instructions from the King. Louis became alarmed lest his secret plots should be discovered, and D'Eon began to make terms for delivering up the papers. Before the negotiations were completed Louis XV. died, and under Louis XVI. Beaumarchais was sent over to continue them. There had long been rumours that D'Eon was a woman, and for some reason or other he told Beaumarchais that this was the case. This admission happened to suit the French Government, and they pinned D'Eon to it, making it a condition of his receiving any remuneration for his services that he should openly announce that he was a woman and adopt female dress. This was done, but the pretence must have been rather thin. Landmann (*Adventures and Recollections*, i. 33) tells us that on July 25, 1789, he "dined in company with the celebrated and far-famed Chevalière d'Eon." He says, however, that "her voice was gruff, and as strong as that of a grenadier; her complexion decidedly brown; in short, she had every appearance of a man in woman's clothes." Hannah More, writing to one of her sisters in May of the same year, says: "On Friday I gratified the curiosity of many years by meeting at dinner Madame la Chevalière d'Eon; she is extremely entertaining, has universal infor-

mation, wit, vivacity, and gaiety ; something too much of the latter (I have heard) when she has taken a bottle or two of Burgundy." On d'Eon's death in 1810 his real sex was, of course, revealed.

On March 12, 1764, Etheldreda's husband died, and there was a great deal of curiosity in society as to how far the rapacity of his mistress had interfered with the prospects of his family. Horace Walpole, who would be likely to know, writes to Lord Hertford that none of Lord Townshend's children were mentioned in the will, except George, who succeeded to the title, and to whom a small property adjoining the Rainham estate was given. "Charles," we are told, "is much disappointed and disconcerted—not so my Lady, who has to £2,000 a year already, another £1,000 in jointure, and £1,500 her own estate in Hertfordshire. We conclude that the Duke of Argyle will abandon Mrs. Villiers for this richer widow ; who will only be inconsolable, as she is too cunning, I believe, to let anybody console her."

By this time, however, her health had begun to decline : and Walpole writes to Mann (March 18, 1764) that Lord Townshend "has given everything he could to a housemaid, by whom he had three children ; but a great deal reverts to my Lady, who cannot enjoy that, or her widowhood, as she would have done a few years ago. She is paralytic ; and it affects all that pleased one in her—her speech and her spirits."

But whatever her physical infirmities may have been, they did not affect her vigour of character. In 1765 a house-painter sent her in a bill for double the amount of his estimate. This she refused to pay, and the tradesman retaliated by having her arrested in the street. Walpole posted off this exciting piece of gossip to Lord Hertford at once, remarking, "As this is a breach of privilege I should think the man would hear of it." His surmise was correct : for we learn from *The Gentleman's Magazine* of February, 1765, that "the attorney who caused Lady T——, a peeress in her own right, to be arrested, was brought up to the bar of the House of Lords, and after being severely reprimanded,



CHEVALIER D'EON.



upon his making his humble submission, was discharged, upon his paying the usual fees; and at the same time it was ordered that himself and the plaintiff should pay the costs of the bailiffs."

Moreover, in spite of her frivolity, there were other sides to her character. It was perhaps as a reaction to the devil-may-care impulses which hurried her into so many of her excesses that this extraordinary woman had frequent fits of religious devotion. Lady Orford, wife of the second Lord Orford, who died in 1751, was one of her boon companions. Like Lady Townshend, she had separated from her husband, and in point of morals there probably was not much to choose between the two. They are coupled together in an Ode of Lord Nugent's, who thus describes the Duchess of Manchester:—

Sprightly as Orford's Countess, she,  
And as the wanton Townshend free,  
And more than both, discreet.

But while Lady Orford posed as a philosopher and an atheist, Lady Townshend would permit no attacks on religious belief. Lady Orford in consequence found her social path beset with thorns which her companion escaped. Walpole writes to Mann (September 20, 1745), "My Lady Orford makes little progress in popularity. Neither the protection of my Lady Pomfret's prudery, nor my Lady Townshend's libertinism, do her any service." Lady Mary Wortley Montagu has the same tale to tell. In a letter of June 10, 1751, she says that Lady Orford "has parts, and a very engaging manner. Her company would have amused me very much, but I durst not indulge in it, her character being in universal horror. I do not mean from her gallantries, which nobody trouble their heads with, but she had a collection of freethinkers that met weekly at her house to the scandal of all good Christians."

In *Pompey the Little* there is a conversation between the two, Lady Orford appearing as Lady Sophister. The conversation is evidently pretty true to life, for Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, in a letter to her daughter,

Lady Bute, in 1752, declares that she has heard the parties to it say the very things which are there put into their mouths. And here we find that Lady Townshend (as Lady Tempest) will not allow the irreligious sneers of Lady Sophister, the author observing by way of comment that "she believed all the doctrines of religion, and was contented, like many others, with the trifling privilege only of disobeying all its precepts." Moreover, incredible as it may seem, she had a close friendship with the austere and devout Lady Huntingdon. The friendship apparently began in Lady Huntingdon's younger days, when she was much at Court, but—as her biographer anxiously reminds us—"took no part in the fashionable levities of the great and gay." Possibly, however, this statement is rather apologetic than historical; otherwise it is difficult to see how her orbit could have crossed Lady Townshend's. But be this as it may, the friendship endured after Lady Huntingdon took definitely to religious propagandism and to some extent carried Lady Townshend with her. The latter, when the religious mood was upon her, was a regular attendant at Lady Huntingdon's "spiritual routs," and joyfully imbibed the Gospel according to Whitefield. She was, in fact, the first to extol his preaching, and belonged to the band of fashionable devotees whom he used to describe as his "honourable women," and of whom he was, with some reason, not a little afraid.

We are accustomed to regard the Methodist movement as a great religious revival, but we sometimes hardly realise that in its infancy it was also a fashionable cult. Horace Walpole is never tired of railing at it, and speaks of Whitefield as an arch rogue. Writing to Mann on March 23, 1749, he says: "Methodism is more fashionable than anything but brag: the women play very deep at both." And in a letter of the 3rd of May following: "This sect increases as fast as almost ever any religious nonsense did. Lady Fanny Shirley has chosen this way of bestowing the dregs of her beauty; and Mr. Lyttleton [afterwards the "good" Lord Lyttleton] is very near

making the same sacrifice of the dregs of all those various characters that he has worn." Lady Fanny Shirley was credited with a *liaison* with Lord Chesterfield, and Lyttleton had been a freethinker before his conversion to orthodoxy. But under the powerful patronage of Lady Huntingdon, Whitefield's religious clientele increased apace among the aristocracy. We hear of his meetings being attended by the Duchesses of Bedford, Grafton, Richmond, Hamilton, Montagu, and Manchester; by Lady Chesterfield, Lady Gertrude Hotham, Lady Charlotte Edwin (a converted scoffer), Lady Cobham, Lady Cardigan and others, and by some of the earnest Blue-stocking ladies, such as Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Boscowen. Some of these at any rate were impelled to attend by religious motives. But it can only have been Methodism in its aspect as a fashionable craze which attracted such strange votaries as the notorious Duke of Kingston, Lord March (afterwards "Old Q"), Lady Caroline Petersham, George Selwyn, Bubb Dodington, Charles Townshend and Charles Fox. Wesley, who ultimately broke with his colleague Whitefield, and had always differed from his Calvinistic views, grew rather jealous of his social success, and described his aristocratic flock as "the genteel Methodists." This brought him into strong opposition to Lady Huntingdon, and may perhaps have inspired Lady Townshend's bitter remark about his canting. But though she supported Whitefield capriciously when the mood was on her, there was no real substance in her faith. Among her Methodist friends was a certain Miss Edwin, whose charms seem to have been rather of the mind than of the person. For some reason or other Lady Townshend had become offended with her, and conceived a characteristic plan of revenge when they were both at Tunbridge Wells. This is told by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in a letter to Lady Pomfret in 1738. "The secret cause," she writes, "is variously guessed at; but it is certain that Lady Townshend came into the great room gently behind her friend, and tapping her on the shoulder with her fan, said aloud, 'I know where, how, and who!' These

mysterious words drew the attention of all the company, and had such an effect upon poor Kitty, she was carried to her lodgings in strong hystericks. However, by the intercession of prudent mediators, peace was concluded."

Her religious awakenings were often stimulated by bad health. On these occasions she would write letters full of concern for her "eternal interests" to Lady Huntingdon or Whitefield, and apparently always elicited the sympathy of these long-suffering advisers. But she by no means confined herself to one communion, for in her religion, as in some of her other tastes, she preferred variety, and was quite ready to sip the spiritual sweets of rival creeds. One afternoon in the spring of 1766 George Selwyn, who was strolling home to his five o'clock dinner, saw her coach stop at a Roman Catholic chapel (Caraccioli's). He was always ready for mischief, and this seemed to him a fine opportunity. He watched carefully and saw her enter the chapel, leaving the grinning footman outside. Following her cautiously, he saw her go up to the altar, cross herself, and begin to pray. When she was in the midst of her devotions, he stole up and knelt by her side. "Conceive her face if you can," writes Walpole, "when she turned and found him close to her! In his most demure voice, he said, 'Pray, madam, how long has your ladyship left the pale of our Church?' She looked furious, and made no answer." Selwyn was not the man to let such a matter drop, and he called on her the next day to pursue his inquiries. She pretended, but of course without effect, that she had visited the chapel out of mere curiosity. More probably, under the pressure of her guilty fears, she had resolved, as the phrase goes, "to take no chances"; or, as Walpole expressed it, "She certainly means to go armed with every Viaticum, the Church of England in one hand, Methodism in t'other, and the Host in her mouth."

The Gordon riots in 1780 frightened her dreadfully, and, according to Walpole, she began at once to recant her political faith, and to talk the language of the Court instead of the Opposition. Selwyn sardonically observed that "she put him in mind of removed tradesmen, who hang out a



board with 'Burnt out from over the way.' " She was then nearly eighty years old, and what little more we hear of her is chiefly from Selwyn's letters. Her daughter, Mrs. Orme, died in January, 1781, but this did not affect her greatly. Selwyn, who went to condole, wrote to Lord Carlisle that "Lady Townshend does not affect much grief about her daughter, so the children have not much to expect or Jack much reason to fear a rival." This prophecy proved correct, for on her death the whole of her enormous fortune went to her grandson, Lord John Townshend. This daughter, Walpole tells us, had been designed for Lord George Lennox, but she disappointed the expectations of her friends by eloping with a Lieutenant Orme, whom she subsequently married, an incident over which the wits of society made merry, as appears from the satirical poetry of the day. Lady Townshend's house in Whitehall was open to Selwyn and other select friends, who used to dine with her periodically. In a letter to Lord Carlisle of December 13, 1781, Selwyn mentions one of these parties. "I dine to-day at Lady Townshend's with Williams (Gilly, the Wit), General, Vernon, and Jack. It is a kind of *anniversaire*. Williams furnishes half a doe." August 3rd was another of these festal days which Selwyn observed so religiously as on one occasion to forsake a turtle at Almack's in order to dine on a haunch of venison at Lady Townshend's. She still remained of the world worldly, and, as far as her waxing years permitted, kept abreast of its ways. Horace Walpole seems by this time to have dropped more or less out of her life. He still turned instinctively to feminine friendships; but his spirits and energy had been weakened by the ravages of gout, and he found the sympathy of such women as Hannah More and the gentle and gifted Lady Ossory more congenial in these later days. The two Misses Berry did not come on the scene till later. Selwyn, an inveterate man of society, did not lose touch with her in the same way, and as late as 1786 he mentions in a letter to Lady Carlisle the parties at Whitehall of "my immortal friend, my Lady Townshend." Age, however, did not impair the briskness of her humour. In 1775 or 1776

Mrs. Thomas Coke happened to remark to her that she was going down to Holkham. "Then, my dear," replied Lady Townshend, "all you will see will be one blade of grass and two rabbits fighting for it." Her race, however, was nearly run. Almost to the last she clung gamely to the relics of the social life in which she had once careered so brilliantly : almost to the last she had periodical fits of devotion and "took prayers" for her soul's health. She died on March 9, 1788, and it is hard to suppose that she can have left many mourners. She had some of the superficial attractions of a *bon camarade*, but she was neither amiable nor affectionate, and her faults were not redeemed by any of the generous impulses which often accompany unruly passions. Yet it is a singular fact that, in spite of her moral delinquencies, she was able to retain the friendship of many great ladies whose morals were beyond reproach and whose religion was always rigid and sometimes austere. Sometimes, it is true, a steady profession of religious principles will go far to condone an irregular morality ; but the wayward instability of Etheldreda's beliefs would have robbed them of any saving grace in the eyes of the most indulgent critic. There must have been something about her, something more than mere beauty or mere wit, which disarmed the avenging hand of outraged propriety. She was certainly a shrewd observer of human nature, and this seems to have given her a tactful appreciation of the line of the least resistance. She wanted her own way ; but, given that, other people might take theirs. She liked to have her own circle, and she liked it to be brilliant ; but at parties, as Mrs. Montagu noticed, she never interfered with the circle of a rival. She seems, moreover, to have had a charm of manner to which even the sage Mrs. Boscawen yielded, when she found her alone one day at Mrs. Montagu's, and "in her best way, very chatty." But her chief claim to distinction was her striking personality, which carried her to the front wherever she moved. In the light intellectual realm where The Wits claimed supremacy she showed that she could hold her own with the best of them : in a vicious society she startled the world with the audacity of her vices ; and in those strange bursts of repen-

tance which from time to time swept over her, her devotion glowed as ardently as that of the very elect. She has, indeed, no great claim to immortality, but Fame is a capricious jade and has kept her memory green while more deserving names have perished. Praise, of course, she has withheld, for praise is impossible ; and if any tribute is to be paid to this wild and disordered life, nothing can be more fitting than a simple *Requiescat in pace*.

## VII. A MALE BLUE-STOCKING

ACCORDING to popular ideas the Blue-stocking movement was pre-eminently the creation of feminine intellect, and in the main the popular ideas are right. Its origin, at least, was purely feminine. It represented on the woman's side the revolt of culture against card-playing, the card-playing which was rapidly smothering all rational kinds of social intercourse. Some of the clever women of the period began to resent the predominance of assemblies where the talk was limited to inquiries about trumps, and wherein

Conversation's setting light  
Lay half obscured in Gothic night.

And so by degrees little conversation parties began to take place, chiefly under the auspices of Mrs. Chapone and Mrs. Vesey, where learned ladies could air their accomplishments free from the dangerous rivalry of the card-table. Into this modest kingdom Mrs. Montagu entered with a swoop, and made it her own. Her wealth, her social position, and her dominating character enabled her to raise the Blue-stockings to an eminence which they never would otherwise have attained. But even then, though woman carried off the honours, half of her success was due to the help of man. For the pretensions of the Blue-stocking ladies, when soberly examined, appear surprisingly slender. There was an abundance of learning—some of it rather arid—among them, but no great amount of talent. Hannah More is the only one of the whole group who achieved any substantial literary success; and though she left a pen-made fortune of £30,000, the very names of her books, with, perhaps, the exception of *Cælebs*, are now forgotten. Mrs. Montagu's ostentatious little productions have shared

the same fate. The erudite Miss Carter has fared no better in the matter of immortality. In vain did she burn the midnight oil, with a wet towel round her head and another round the pit of her stomach, chewing coffee and green tea the while to keep herself awake. For though her translation of *Epictetus* brought her in nearly £1,000, its memory has almost perished. Mrs. Barbauld's anæmic verses have passed into oblivion with her improving books for children, which Lamb so stoutly denounced. "Hang them," he wrote to Coleridge in 1802, "I mean the cursed Barbauld crew, those blights and blasts of all that is human in man and child." We no longer turn for instruction to Mrs. Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*; and, in spite of the *furor* which Fanny Burney excited, *Evelina* is now chiefly interesting as an antique. Mrs. Boscawen—the "Boscawen sage" of *The Bas Bleu*—apparently kept all her sagacity for conversation. Mrs. Delany is now only known by her voluminous letters. And, speaking generally, the literary productions of the other Blue-stockings were of no particular merit. Left to themselves, the Blue-stocking parties would have perished of inanition; but they were fortunate in attracting the attendance of some able men, who infused a saving vigour into them. If Mrs. Montagu was Queen of the Blue-stockings, Johnson was their uncrowned King. Neither monarch was entirely popular, and Johnson, towards the end, became cordially detested. After his unmannerly attack on poor Pepys at Mrs. Thrale's house in 1781, Lady Rothes, Lady Shelley, Mrs. Hetsel, and some other of the Blue-stocking hostesses, dreading his quarrelsome brutality, ceased to invite him. Mrs. Thrale was roused by this out of her submissive adoration, and rated him soundly on his bad manners. Nevertheless, his was a giant support, and the Blue-stockings never really recovered from his death in December, 1784. Besides him, Garrick, Reynolds, Burke, Lord Bath, and Dr. Burney were to be met at these gatherings, as well as Horace Walpole, Lord Lyttleton, Benjamin Stillingfleet, the semi-reverend Pepys,\*

\* Sir William Weller Pepys, father of the first Earl of Cottenham.

and a sprinkling of real bishops. Gibbon seems to have kept steadily aloof, and, indeed, his opinions were little suited to the somewhat unctuous piety of the Blue-stockings. Hannah More, though she appreciated some of his work, found the style of the *Decline and Fall* as vicious as its substance. Writing in 1788 to Pepys she exclaims: "I protest, I think that if this work were to become the standard of style and religion, Christianity and the English language would decay pretty nearly together; and the same period would witness the downfall of sound principles and of true taste. I have seldom met with more affectation or less perspicuity. The instances of false English are many; and of false taste endless."

Tantæne animus cœlestibus iræ!

And in the wake of the great ones came a crowd of smaller men—"the out-pensioners of Parnassus," as Horace Walpole called them—who helped to swell the success of these entertainments. Anyone with any pretensions to ability or erudition had little difficulty in gaining admittance, with the result, as Hannah More took pride in declaring, that they "embraced everything witty and everything learned that was to be had." Naturally enough a net with so wide a sweep would include some men of parts whose ability had a dash of the eccentric. Eccentric opinions are prone to provoke the ridicule of their own times, but over and over again they have been vindicated by some succeeding age. As scientific thought becomes definitely organised it tends to grow conservative, and a departure from traditional lines is looked at askance. Yet illumination may come at times from strange quarters. Horace Walpole (then Lord Orford), in a letter of April 16, 1794, to Miss Berry about his demented and dissolute nephew, the late lord, describes as one of his "last frantic acts a publication in some monthly magazine, with an absurd hypothesis on the moon bursting from the earth and the earth from the sun, somehow or other." This is a signal instance of the danger of sitting too hastily in the seat of the scornful, but the ridicule of eccentricity

is always a pastime to be indulged in with caution. Among the male Blue-stockings Lord Monboddo, lawyer, scholar, and philosopher, provoked a good deal of mild amusement by the peculiarity of his habits and opinions. After he had been made a Scottish judge he had a strange fancy for sitting with the clerks in the court, instead of with his brother judges on the Bench. He used to make an annual visit to London from Edinburgh, but he never would travel in a carriage, because this vehicle was not habitually used in the classical times to which he was so fondly attached. He was much twitted by his contemporaries on his belief, as it was put, in a race of men with tails. His actual theory was that the ourang-outang was essentially human in every respect but the power of speech; and, absurd as this might seem in pre-Darwinian days, the anthropoid character of the higher apes is, of course, a commonplace of modern science. So, too, notwithstanding his undoubted cleverness, Soame Jenyns must be classed among the eccentrics, though his eccentricity hardly clouded his intellectual power and never touched the many lovable qualities of his character.

He came of a Somersetshire family, one branch of which, in the middle of the seventeenth century, had settled in Cambridgeshire. His father, Sir Roger Jenyns, who had been knighted by William III. in 1693, lived at Bottisham Hall, near Cambridge; but Soame Jenyns was born in Great Ormond Street; and there was an oddity even about his birth. For, as this took place at midnight on the last day of 1703, he declared in later life that, under these circumstances, he was at liberty to select between the old year and the new. And accordingly he adopted New Year's Day for the day of his birth on account of its festive associations. He was educated at home till he went, in 1722, as a fellow commoner to St. John's College, Cambridge. Twenty years later he became member for Cambridge, a seat which he occupied till 1780, with the exception of four years, when he sat for Dunwich, in Suffolk. In 1780 he seems to have passed through a stormy election; for Horace Walpole writes to Mason on May 28, 1780, that "Jenyns has been

half killed at the nomination of members for Cambridge-shire." In 1755 he was appointed one of the Lords Commissioners of the Board for Trade and Plantations, in which capacity he is several times mentioned in Walpole's letters. He was a man of simple and regular habits, and with tastes which enabled him to enjoy both London and the country. But he was far enough removed from the typical country squire of the day. Sport he abhorred because of its cruelty; and while he enjoyed social intercourse and quiet hospitality, he could not endure dissipation or any form of riotous excess. His tastes are compactly described in his invitation to Lord Lovelace to visit him in the country, in the last lines of which he promises his friend

A house where quiet guards the door,  
No rural wits smoke, drink, and roar,  
Choice books, safe horses, wholesome liquor,  
Clean girls, backgammon, and the Vicar.

But he had no distaste even for the lighter entertainments of society, as is shown by his poem on *The Art of Dancing*, which appeared in 1727 and was dedicated to Lady Fanny Fielding. It presents us with a very good picture of the ball of the period. As a poem it has no great merit, but it trips along pleasantly enough and discusses its subject with the most conscientious minuteness. The young man and maiden are instructed not only how to dance, but how to dress, behave, and refresh themselves. Some of the instructions sound curious enough to our ears. The beau's wig must not be over-powdered lest the dresses of his partners suffer. The tongues of his shoe-buckles must be carefully pressed flat, and "the sword that dangles at his side should from its silken bondage be unty'd." Precautions like these were obvious enough under the circumstances. But the "gallant spark" is further reminded that he should

. . . in his fob enlivening spirits wear,  
And pungent salts to raise the fainting fair.

This piece of advice is rather interesting; for it indicates the beginning of that feminine "sensibility" which seems





LORD MONBODDO.



to have been rampant in the time of Jane Austen. In those days, as Mr. Stephen Gwynne reminds us in his delightful essay, "temporary loss of consciousness was an ordinary incident in the life of a well-bred female"; and every lady carried restoratives in her pocket in readiness for the "swoons" of herself or her friends. Swooning is now as extinct as those mysterious disorders, the vapours and the spleen, with which our eighteenth-century ancestors were so persistently afflicted; but the "sensibility" from which it sprang was, even in Jenyns's time, a growing evil which evoked some sturdy protests from Hannah More.

He has next some advice to give as to the dress of ladies, into which we need not follow him further than to notice one eminently masculine protest:—

Dare I in such momentous points advise,  
I should condemn the hoop's enormous size;  
Of ills I speak by long experience found,  
Oft have I trod th' immeasurable round,  
And mourned my shins bruised black with many a wound.

As to the proper refreshment for a lady—

. . . gen'rous white-wine mulled with ginger, warm,  
Safely protects her inward frame from harm.  
But ever let my lovely pupils fear  
To chill their mantling blood with cold small-beer.  
\* \* \* \* \*  
Destruction lurks within the pois'nous dose,  
A fatal fever, or a pimpled nose.

Notwithstanding an amiability and a delicate consideration for others which made him, as Cumberland tells us, "the charm of the circle," he had a quick eye for the vices and follies of the age. It was fashionable at that time for young men of position to make a tour on the Continent by way of completing their education. Travelling boys and their "governors" constantly appear in the letters of the eighteenth century as objects of ridicule and reprobation. Horace Walpole, who describes them as "woful exports," says of the travelling "governors" that "their pride is always hurt because they are sure of its never being in-

dulged. They will not learn the world, because they are sent to teach it, and as they come forth more ignorant of it than their pupils, they take care to return with more prejudices." Tutelage of this kind cannot have been very profitable, and it seems as if these youngsters usually acquired little from the foreign countries which they visited except a smattering of their vices. Jenyns sums up the position by declaring that the boy returns from his travels

Half atheist, papist, gamester, bubble, rook,  
Half fiddler, coachman, dancer, groom, and cook.

The fashionable lady, the ways of the country house, the struggle to get into good society, the unbounded insolence of servants, and other social topics are all touched with a crisp though not malignant satire. But his real interests lay deeper than these light themes; and when he passed on to graver matters he began to puzzle his contemporaries, for here his eccentricity came to the front. "Though his wit was harmless," says Cumberland, "yet the general cast of it was ironical." This was true so far as his wit was concerned, but it is quite easy to over-estimate the ironical element in his writings. Horace Walpole, for instance, repeatedly attributes to irony what is simply eccentricity expressing itself in whimsical extravagance or paradox. He was eminently an original thinker, but he could not keep under due control the exuberant fancy by which his thought was fed; and even his most serious writings are sometimes disfigured by excursions into the fantastic. Still there is a freshness about his extravagances which somehow compels one's interest. In 1765 the taxation of the American Colonies was a burning question, and to this controversy Soame Jenyns contributed a characteristic essay. The rights of Englishmen, the claims of liberty, the duties attaching to property, had been freely pressed into the discussion, but Jenyns would have none of them. Brushing them all aside, he declared that the right of Great Britain to tax her American colonists was indisputable, but for a reason which had so far escaped attention. It was impossible, as he argued with considerable cleverness, to justify logically

the taxation of any British subject on any of the grounds usually put forward; but if it was nevertheless right to tax an Englishman, it could not be wrong to tax an American.

His *Reflections* exhibit a good many specimens of his ingenious perversities. "Advice is seldom well received, well intended, or productive of any good: it is seldom well received, because it implies a superiority of judgment in the giver; and it is seldom intended for any other end than to show it: it is seldom of any service to the giver, because it more frequently makes him an enemy than a friend; and as seldom to the receiver, because if he is not wise enough to act properly without it, he will scarcely be wise enough to distinguish that which is good." Again, "As property always produces power, so power is always convertible into property. . . . How absurd, therefore, are those who labour at the same time to increase liberty and to destroy corruption; that is, who endeavour to give the people more power to carry to market, and at the same time to hinder them from selling it."

Here, however, is a flash of insight: "There is, undoubtedly, great difference in the wisdom and honesty of particular men, but very little in those of large numbers in the same situation and circumstances; as individual grains of corn may differ much in size and weight, but two bushels taken out of the same heap will certainly be nearly similar." Jenyns, though a strong supporter of the Church, was quite alive to its failings, and some of his remarks on religion are those of a candid friend. Thus: "In religious quarrels the propositions in dispute are generally such as those who impose them cannot believe, and those who reject them cannot understand: and therefore no one is persecuted for not believing, but for not professing to believe when they do not; that is for insolently presuming to be either wiser or honester than their persecutors." So too, faith, in the sense "of a docility to receive truth," he regards as wholly meritorious. But seeing that its contents are still "so undetermined that no two ages, nations, or sects have affixed to it the same ideas," it is dangerous to lay too much stress upon

it. And still more mischievous is the doctrine which proposes it "as a composition for moral duties." For this "is in fact nothing more than offering to the people a licence to be profligate at the easy price of being absurd—a bargain which they will ever readily agree to."

He propounds a quaint though dubious explanation of the apparent variation in the speed of time's flight. The apparent speed of a given period of time depends, he says, on the proportion which this period bears to the duration of our past life. Thus, when we have lived ten years, one year is the tenth part of the duration of our whole existence; but when we have lived eighty, it is then but the eightieth part of the same term. This he asserts to be the reason why time seems to fly faster in age than in youth.

A sounder explanation, however, is suggested in his essay on *The Nature of Time*, in which, indeed, he rises to a much higher level altogether. Most people who have dabbled in metaphysics are acquainted with the doctrine that time is only a condition of human life and thought, not an absolute reality. This doctrine, as Jenyns reminds us, is at least as old as Lucretius,\* yet it would probably still sound strange to unphilosophical folk; and to these Jenyns's essay, though not quite free from errors, might be commended as a model of clear reasoning and lucid exposition. There seem to be, he says, two modes of existence: the perpetually instantaneous or eternal, in which all events, past, present, and future, appear in one view, and the temporal, in which events occur successively. Time is finite and successive, Eternity infinite and instantaneous. We, of course, exist in time, but, as he shows by a clever illustration, the temporal may be only an aspect of the eternal mode. We now perceive, he

\* Tempus item per se non est, sed rebus ab ipsis  
Consequitur sensus, transactum quid sit in ævo,  
Tum quæ res instet, quid porro deinde sequatur;  
Nec per se quemquam tempus sentire fatendumst  
Semotum ab rerum motu placidaque quieto.

*De Rer. Nat.*, i. 459-63.

says, every event "as it passes through a small aperture separately, as in the camera obscura, and this we call time; but at the conclusion of this state we may probably exist in a manner quite different; the window may be thrown open, the whole prospect appear at one view, and all this apparatus which we call time be totally done away with."

We cannot follow him into the conclusions as to Divine foreknowledge, predestination, the pre-existence and future state of the soul, eternal punishment, evil, and so forth, which he draws from the timelessness of the eternal absolute. But at the end of it all comes that gleam of humour which is seldom long absent from Jenyns's work. He admits that his arguments are not calculated to appeal to ordinary men of the world. "For to endeavour to convince a merchant subsisting on long credit, a lawyer enriched by delay, a divine who has purchased a next presentation, a general who is in no hurry to fight, or a minister whose object is the continuation of his power, that time is nothing, is an arduous task, and very unlikely to be attended with success."

Johnson thought fit to ridicule Soame Jenyns's metaphysics, and his satellites obediently took up the chorus. Jenyns, however, as a metaphysician, was decidedly superior to Johnson; and, indeed, Johnson's attitude towards the question of freewill and his mode of proving the existence of matter are fatal to his pretensions to be a philosophical critic. Under these circumstances Jenyns, not unnaturally, resented the doctor's ridicule; and his wounded feelings inspired the only ill-natured piece to be found in his writings—namely, his famous epitaph on Johnson. And even this has been much misrepresented, or at least misunderstood. It was not a deliberate attack on the memory of a dead friend, but, at the worst, no more than a sharp jest at the expense of a living one. Jenyns and some friends were one day amusing themselves by composing epitaphs on each other, and this supplied him with his opportunity. The epitaph as originally cast ran thus:

Here lies Sam Johnson: Reader, have a care,  
Tread lightly, lest you wake a sleeping Bear:  
Religious, moral, generous, and humane  
He was; but self-sufficient, proud, and vain;  
Fond of, and overbearing in dispute,  
A Christian, and a Scholar—but a Brute.

This is the form in which it appears in his works, and no doubt was that in which it was first written. After Johnson's death Jenyns seems to have altered and added to it. For Mrs. Boscawen, in a letter of April 26, 1786, writes to Mrs. Delany: "I will send you an epitaph upon Dr. Johnson which my good neighbour, Mr. Jenyns, sent me written with his own hand, and therefore I suspect of his own composing." The epitaph is thus given at the end of the letter:—

Here lies poor Johnson: Reader, have a care,  
Tread lightly, lest you rouse a sleeping *bear*!  
*Religious*, moral, gen'rous, and *humane*  
He was; but self-sufficient, rude, and vain.  
Ill-bred, and overbearing in dispute,  
A Scholar and a Christian, yet a brute.

Would you know all his wisdom and his folly,  
His actions, sayings, mirth, and melancholy,  
Boswell and Thrale, retailers of his wit,  
Will tell you how he *wrote*, and talk'd, and cough'd, and spit!

The last four lines are those which have given most offence; but it will be observed that they were written about a year and a half after Johnson's death, and are evidently directed chiefly at the rather sordid squabbles between Boswell and Mrs. Thrale (then Mrs. Piozzi) over their respective memoirs of him.

It must be remembered, moreover, that Johnson had attacked Jenyns in public as well as in private, having published in *The Literary Magazine* in 1757 a long criticism on his *Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*. This was Jenyns's last work, and it attracted considerable attention. It fails, as all attempts from the same standpoint must fail, but it is very cleverly put together, and is argued with great ability. It was published



in 1757, and though not nearly so learned, it is much more readable than Archbishop King's colossal treatise, *De Origine Mali*, which appeared in 1702, and was partly translated into English in 1729. The great difficulty which every such inquiry has to face is to account for the presence of evil in the work of a benign and all-powerful Creator. How, in fact, can evils be reconciled with a belief in the benevolence and omnipotence of the Deity? Jenyns himself puts the point neatly: "If we assert that He [God] could not prevent them, we destroy His power: if that He would not, we arraign His goodness; and therefore His power and goodness cannot both be infinite."

The argument is unanswerable; but Jenyns, like King, does not admit this, and declares that the difficulty is entirely due to an erroneous idea of omnipotence. For "Omnipotence," he insists, "cannot work contradictions, it can only effect all possible things." And under any possible method "of framing the universal system of things, such numberless inconveniences might necessarily arise, that all that infinite power and wisdom could do was to make choice of that method which was attended with the least and fewest." He holds, in short, with King, that only such evils are permitted as could not have been prevented without the loss of some superior good. And some evil is inevitable, for "to endue created things with perfection, that is, to produce good exclusive of evil, is one of the impossibilities which even infinite power cannot accomplish." And this explanation of material evil he boldly extends to the graver problem of moral evil. If it be objected, he says, that his theory makes God the author of sin, "I answer, God is, and must be, the author of everything. . . . God is the author, if it may be so expressed, of all the natural evils in the universe; that is, of the fewest possible in the nature of things; and why may He not be the author of all moral evil in the same manner, and on the same principle? If natural evil owes its existence to necessity, why may not moral? If misery brings with it its utility, why may not wickedness?"

Reasoning of this kind, however, is mere trifling with language; for to Omnipotence there can, of course, be no impossibility. But with this difficulty Johnson does not venture to grapple; and his criticism consists chiefly of charges of plagiarism from Pope, and some not very impressive metaphysical arguments. Jenyns represented the created universe to be a system composed of higher and lower orders of beings, all duly subordinated to the purpose of the whole. The result of this purpose was perfection, but the various parts of the scale of being were, by reason of their subordination, imperfect, and therefore tainted with evil. It is quite possible that the notion was borrowed from Pope; though, as Johnson admits, it had a still earlier origin. It may be noticed in passing that Sir William Petty, in 1676, had contemplated publishing a treatise on "The Scale of Creatures," which he tells Sir Robert Southwell "was not vulgar, nor easy to be answered by the libertine scepticks, of whom the proudest cannot be certain but that there are powers above him, which can destroy him as they do with the animals." This, as will be seen, was closely akin to Jenyns's ideas, but the project came to nothing. Petty's avowed object was "to sufficiently humble man, and check the insolent scepticisms which do now pester the world." But this attack on the atheist was denounced by the theologian also as being unscriptural, and Petty found that his theories were likely to rouse around him such an ecclesiastical storm that he prudently abandoned his design. Evidently, therefore, ideas of this kind were in the air at the time, and, under such circumstances, charges of plagiarism do not count for much. According to Jenyns, sufferings are to be considered as the necessary taxes which every member of this system—this "republic of the universe" as he calls it—is obliged to pay towards the support of the community. These taxes, it is true, are not imposed equally in the present state of things, but that is no slur on the Divine goodness. For our present life "is but one page in a voluminous accompt, from which no judgment can be formed on the state of

the whole; but of this we may be assured, that the balance will some time or other be settled with justice and impartiality."

But in dealing with the immediate cause of human suffering Jenyns's wayward fancy comes into play. Just as the imperfections of the parts contribute to the perfection of the whole, so the evils of one order of beings may, he urges, minister to the pleasure or welfare of a higher order; and herein may be found an explanation of human suffering. Man is but one link in the vast chain of existence. "As there are many thousands below him, so must there be many more above him. If we look downwards, we see innumerable species of inferior beings, whose happiness and lives are dependent on his will; we see him clothed by their spoils, and fed by their miseries and destruction, enslaving some, tormenting others, and murdering millions for his luxury or diversion; is it not therefore analogous and highly probable that man should be equally dependent on the wills of his superiors? As we receive great part of our pleasures, and even subsistence, from the sufferings and deaths of the lower animals, may not these superior beings do the same from ours?—and that by ways as far above the reach of the most exalted human understandings as the means by which we receive our benefits are above the capacities of the meanest creatures destined for our service."

This startling theory of human suffering attracts our interest in spite of its grotesqueness. Its conception of an order of beings too far exalted above mankind for moral relations to exist between themselves and men certainly offers a corrective to what Jenyns calls man's importance to himself. And these dim beings have some of the weird fascination of Browning's Nature spirits, or the mountains which

Like giants at a hunting, lay,  
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay,

as they crouched round Childe Roland in his hour of doom.

But Johnson's lash descended upon it without mercy. These superior creatures to whose comfort or amusement human suffering is supposed to minister may sink a ship, he suggests, as we drown kittens; "or stand round the fields of Blenheim or the walls of Prague as we encircle a cockpit. As we shoot a bird flying, they take a man in the midst of his business or pleasure, and knock him down with an apoplexy. . . . Many a merry bout have these frolic beings at the vicissitudes of an ague, and good sport it is to see a man tumble with an epilepsy, and revive and tumble again, and all this he knows not why." They may even, he proceeds (with rather a clumsy tilt at Jenyns), find a subtle enjoyment in the contemplation of human folly, and amuse themselves by filling a man's head with idle notions till he is tempted to venture into philosophy. "Then begins the poor animal to entangle himself in sophisms, and flounder in absurdity, to talk confidently of the scale of being, and to give solutions which himself confesses impossible to be understood."

But cheap ridicule of this kind can hardly rank as criticism, and Johnson does not deal effectively with the solid points in Jenyns's treatise. He is inclined to treat the whole question as a matter to be concluded by revelation. But, as Jenyns shrewdly points out, revelation in this case is no safe guide. For it is the revelation of a Deity who permits human suffering; and "if God can injure us, He may also deceive us." Even Johnson himself seems to have felt that his criticism was not altogether a success, and he ends it with this significant passage: "To object is always easy, and it has been well observed by a late writer, that the hand which cannot build a hovel may demolish a palace."

Indeed, on a question like this Johnson's prejudices would disorder his judgment. Horace Walpole was, of course, a hostile critic, but there is a good deal of truth in his remark that Johnson had all the bigotry of a monk. Jenyns, on the other hand, had been a sceptic in his youth, and brought into his religious discussions a broadness of thought which was altogether distasteful to Johnson's

intolerance. Regarding the Deity as "our universal parent, guardian, friend," he laughs to scorn the sour Puritan view that

God is a Being cruel and severe  
And Man a wretch, by His command plac'd here,  
In sunshine for awhile to take a turn,  
Only to dry and make him fit to burn.

But though his religious views were broad, they were undoubtedly earnest and sincere; and his religious writings, in spite of some bitter clerical attacks, seem to have effected the conversion of many doubters. Nevertheless, there was a disposition among his friends to slight his religious opinions as the crude ideas of a beginner. Hannah More writes in 1777: "I do love Jenyns, but I do not contend for every part of his book: he is but a sucking child in Christianity, and I am afraid has represented religion as a very uncomfortable thing." Hannah prided herself on having rather a pretty taste in Christianity, but her own orthodoxy was, to say the least, suspect. Her friend, John Newton, roundly asserted that she was a Calvinist. Writing to her in 1794, he says: "I give you full credit, Madam, that you are not an enemy to the Calvinists; I believe you are one yourself, though you are not aware of it." Elsewhere Hannah repudiates this soft impeachment rather faintly, and (if a layman may venture an opinion on such a subject) she certainly seems to have gone astray on the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. The fact was that Jenyns's faith had more vitality than that of his religious critics, because he had reasoned himself into the beliefs which they had accepted on tradition. Having, as he tells us, "some leisure and more curiosity," he employed them both in examining the claims of Christianity to be a supernatural revelation. Not only did he satisfy himself that these claims were sound, but, "in the further pursuit of his examination, he perceived, at every step, new lights arising." To him these new lights furnished the most instructive arguments, but to the startled vision of a comatose orthodoxy they seemed as dangerous and delusive as a will-o'-the-wisp. New light was in truth a most unwelcome dis-

turbance to the official theology, which had suffered seriously in its conflict with Deism, and which desired nothing better than to be left alone. Yet it is from his new lights that Jenyns's work derives half its charm. They are not always trustworthy, but they are nearly always interesting, and even when they beckon us to error they brighten the path. Moreover, the error is often that of a half-told truth ; and the brilliancy of the thinker will tempt us to overlook the occasional perversity of his thought. In his most serious and successful religious work, *A View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion*, he claims for Christian ethics that they contain every moral precept founded on reason, while they exclude all the fictitious virtues which are founded on false principles. Surprised as we may be to find valour, patriotism, and friendship placed among the excluded virtues, our next feeling of surprise is at the quaint ingenuity of the argument which excludes them. Valour, he says, is either constitutional, and therefore morally colourless, or it is the promoter of violence, ambition, and warfare, and therefore morally bad. "If," he adds pithily, "Christian nations were nations of Christians . . . valour could be neither of use nor estimation." Patriotism is to be excluded because it is directly opposed to the principles of Christianity. "Christianity commands us to love all mankind, patriotism to oppress all other countries to advance the imaginary prosperity of our own." As for friendship, if it spring from similarity of sentiment and disinterested affection it has no pretensions to moral merit, "for sinners also love those who love them"; if from any other source, it is either mischievous or non-moral. Again, when it is urged that the mistakes in the Bible are fatal to its claim to be a Divine revelation, he replies that "the Scriptures are not revelations from God, but the history of them"; and consequently that the inaccuracy of the human record does not impeach the Divine truth recorded ; unless, indeed, we are to hold the verbal infallibility of Scripture. This, however, he disclaims as unnecessary and untrue, giving rather an amusing illustration of the faith which was in him. "I have no doubt," he says, "but that St. Paul was shipwrecked, and that he

left his cloak and parchments at Troas ; but the belief of these facts makes no part of Christianity, nor is the truth of them any part of its authority. It proves only that this apostle could not in common life have been under the perpetual influence of infallible inspiration ; for, had he been so, he would not have put to sea in a storm, nor have forgot his cloak." The Christianity in which he believed was not a hidebound system of dogmas, but an animating principle of everyday life. It dealt not only with the eternal verities, but with the commonplaces of human conduct ; with manners as well as with morals. Thus we find him declaring that " Christianity is the best bred religion in the world, although," he adds, " the manners of some of its most rigid professors seem to contradict this assertion."

To return, however, to his eccentricities. The most remarkable of these was his belief in the transmigration of souls, a belief which he defended on the grounds of its justice, its utility, and its solution of the difficulty of animal suffering. It is just, he says, because it provides a means whereby men may suffer in one life the injuries which they have inflicted in another. Thus the tyrant may become a slave or the persecuting priest a religious victim. So, too, sportsmen, who " have entertained themselves with the miseries and destruction of innocent animals, may be terrified and murdered in the shapes of hares, partridges, and woodcocks." It is useful because, under it, all the burdensome though necessary offices of life will be thrown upon those who by their previous misconduct have deserved them. Thus the highwayman may expiate his former injuries to society by serving it in the form of a posthorse. " The metaphorical buck, who has terrified sober citizens by his exploits, converted into a real one, may make them some compensation by his haunches ; and mighty conquerors who have laid waste the world by their swords may be obliged, by a small alteration in sex and situation, to contribute to its re peopling by the qualms of breeding and the pains of childbirth." Surely, we feel, the author has here abandoned sober discussion for burlesque, and is now writing with his tongue in his cheek. Not a bit of it.

“For my own part,” he goes on to say, “I verily believe this to be the case. I make no doubt but that Louis the Fourteenth is now chained to an oar in the galleys of France, and that Hernando Cortez is digging gold in the mines of Peru or Mexico. That Turpin, the highwayman, is several times a day spurred backwards and forwards between London and Epping; and that Lord \* \* \* and Sir Harry \* \* \* are now actually roasting for a city feast. I question not but that Alexander the Great and Julius Cæsar have died many times in child-bed since their appearance in those illustrious and depopulating characters; that Charles the Twelfth is at this instant a curate’s wife in some remote village, with a large and increasing family; and that Kouli Khan is now whipped from parish to parish in the person of a big-bellied beggar-woman with two children in her arms and three at her back.”

The justification of animal suffering has always been a matter of perplexity to the thoughtful; and in the seventeenth century the Cartesian doctrine, that the lower animals were automata and without feeling, was hailed by many as a way out of the difficulty. Jenyns’s solution of the problem is quite different, and he holds that their sufferings may well be the just punishment of previous misconduct. His personal application of this theory is very characteristic.

“Never can the delicious repast of roasted lobsters excite my appetite, whilst the ideas of the tortures in which those innocent animals have expired present themselves to my imagination. But when I consider that they must have once probably been Spaniards at Mexico, or Dutchmen at Amboyna, I fall to, both with a good stomach and a good conscience, and please myself with the thoughts that I am thus offering up a sacrifice acceptable to the Manes of many millions of massacred Indians. Never can I repose myself with satisfaction in a postchaise, whilst I look upon the starved, foundered, ulcerated, and excoriated animals who draw it as mere horses, condemned to such exquisite and unmerited torments for my convenience; but when I reflect that they once must have undoubtedly existed in the character of turnkeys of Newgate, or fathers of the Holy



Inquisition, I gallop on with as much ease as expedition ; and am perfectly satisfied that, in pursuing my journey, I am but the executioner of the strictest justice."

We may observe in passing that he does not seem to perceive that the same reasoning would justify the cruelties of sport which he condemns. But after once more protesting the seriousness of his argument, he proceeds to commend it to the attention of those who "are too sagacious, learned, and courageous to be kept in awe by the threats of hell and damnation." Let the fine lady reflect how wretched her condition will be if she should "be obliged to change places with one of her own coach-horses"; and the fashionable spendthrift should ponder on the discomforts in store for him "if he should again revive in the situation of one of his creditors." His genuine belief in this theory is also shown by the fact that it reappears in his disquisition on evil, where he explains that the penalties suffered under metempsychosis will be taken into account in the adjustment of man's sentence on the final day of doom. As a theory it hardly calls for serious criticism ; but Horace Walpole, in a letter to Mason of May 14, 1782, points out one obvious objection to it. "Can we believe, then, an omnipotent and all-wise Being inflicted punishments, and at the same time took away from the sufferers all knowledge, all consciousness of the crimes they had committed?" Walpole's relations with Jenyns were those of intimacy rather than friendship, and a dislike or jealousy always smouldered underneath them, sometimes bursting into the flame of spite. "Please point to any poetry in Jenyns's works : his best are humour rhymed, and sneers checked by the Court of Chancery from laughing out." This ill-natured criticism was in a letter to Mason of May 15, 1753. Thirty-two years later he writes again to Mason describing a treatise of Soame Jenyns as "a *chef d'œuvre* of impudent profligacy—political profligacy. He adds : "I wish you would persuade Mr. Burgh to answer this galley-slave! Nobody is more capable, no, nor of confuting the whole book, which is a very small one." The offending treatise was one of a series of disquisitions, and formed the

seventh chapter of the book in question. Walpole, however, entirely misunderstood its import; for it is in reality an elaborate argument against the very doctrines which Walpole accuses Jenyns of upholding.

Strange as were the peculiarities of his mind, his physical peculiarities seem to have been stranger still. Walpole, speaking of the portrait of him by Reynolds, says: "It is a proof of Sir Joshua's art, who could give a strong resemblance of so uncouth a countenance without leaving it disagreeable." Cumberland is cruelly precise on the subject of his appearance. "As Nature had cast him in the exact mould of an ill-made pair of stays, he followed her so close in the fashion of his coat, that it was doubted if he did not wear them: because he had a protuberant wen just under his pole, he wore a wig that did not cover above half his head. His eyes were protruded like the eyes of a lobster, who wears them at the end of his feelers, and yet there was room between one of these and his nose for another wen that added nothing to his beauty; yet I heard this good man very innocently remark, when Gibbon published his history, that he wondered anybody so ugly could write a book." Add to this a squeaky voice, and the picture is complete.\*

He was a constant attendant at the Blue-stocking meetings, and of all the queer fowl to be found there he must surely have been the queerest; a figure more grotesque even than "Demogorgon (Johnson) in his monstrous deformity," or the poor weak-headed "Sylph" (Mrs. Vesey), with her absent-minded manner and her cincture of flying ear-trumpets. He seems on these occasions to have haunted the shallows rather than the deeps. He would probably have grown restive under the ponderous oratory of Sir William Pepys or the elaborate self-display of Mrs. Montagu, Hannah More and Horace Walpole were more to his taste; and the former tells us how "content" she was, at a superlatively Blue meeting, to get Walpole and Jenyns into a corner and chat. But everybody liked him, not only for his

\* While Jenyns, in his treble key,  
Replied with much alacrity.

*New Foundling Hospital of Wit*, ii. 58.

abilities, but because he was rich in those minor virtues which contribute so largely to the amenity of life. He was a model of punctuality in his engagements, and when bidden to an entertainment "he dressed, to do the party honour, in all the colours of the rainbow." His simple finery, it is true, had some of its owner's peculiarity. His lace was dingy and "his coat had faithfully retained its cut since the days when gentlemen wore embroidered figured velvets, with short sleeves, boot-cuffs and buckram skirts." But in all essentials he was a man of excellent taste and tact in society. Fanny Burney declared that, in his interview with her, he oppressed her by his extravagant adulation. Complaints of this kind, however, were rather frequent in the mouth of that remarkably self-conscious young person; and, in any case, Jenyns was then in his eightieth year, and old age may have blunted the fine edge of his discrimination. He was undoubtedly a brilliant talker, and even Boswell, no very friendly critic, testifies to his "lively talents." But, more than that, he was an excellent listener. Unlike Johnson, he did not seek to engross the conversation; and though he never bored the company with long stories of his own, he could attend—twisting his snuff-box in his peculiar way—with patience and good-humour to those of other people. Referring to his conversation, Cumberland says: "Certain it is he had a brevity of expression that never hung upon the ear, and you felt the point in the very moment he made the push." This interesting and suggestive description applies with equal truth to his writing. The proposition to be made, the argument to be enforced, is not obscured by any circumlocution. It is presented to one, so to speak, head first, and in a form skilfully framed to touch the fancy as well as to impress the understanding. Had he lived in our own day he would have made an excellent journalist. As a critic his style was that of a light skirmisher rather than that of a heavy dragoon. A rapid attack, a few swift damaging thrusts, and the nimble assailant was off and away. Something of a pessimist he certainly was, particularly in matters political; but the politics of the time were not calculated to

promote optimism, and stronger men than he were found in those days to despair of the republic. His dread of Imperial expansion was as lively as that of a modern Little Englander, and he shared the deep dislike felt by many of his contemporaries for Clive and his Indian conquests. But though his feelings on these matters were strong, they were never inflamed, and no animosity ever soured his gentle and amiable character. How strongly this character had impressed those around him may be gathered from the singular tribute of admiration annexed to the entry of his burial on December 27, 1787, in the parish register of Bottisham. The eulogies of an epitaph must often be accepted with caution ; but in this case there is little reason to discredit the testimony of the officiating minister, “ who thus transgresses the common forms of a Register merely because he thinks it to be the most solemn and lasting method of recording to posterity that the finest understanding has been united to the best heart.”

## VIII. THE SERIOUS SIDE OF A WORLDLY MAN

SINGULAR as the reputation is which Horace Walpole has achieved, the conditions under which he achieved it are more singular still. He has had critics in plenty, and biographers not a few, by whom his merits and demerits have been variously appraised. But in one point friend and foe agree; neither really attempts to take him seriously. We see this alike in the spiteful abuse of Macaulay and the indulging or patronising comments of later writers. They may differ in details, but their general view is much the same; and they are all inclined to treat him as a brilliant trifler, who played at literature, played at art, and only meddled out of mischief in politics. To a certain extent this estimate of him is justified; and, indeed, as appears from the curious description which he has given of his own character (*Memoirs of George II.*, iii. 159), he would, with some reservations, have accepted it himself. This character was written by himself in the third person and dated October 27, 1759. It is too long to quote in full, but the following extract will give a general idea of it. "Walpole had a warm conception, vehement attachments, strong aversions; with an apparent contradiction in his temper—for he had numerous caprices and invincible perseverance. His principles tended to republicanism, but without any of its austerity; his love of faction was unmixed with any aspiring. He had great sense of honour, but not great enough, for he had too much weakness to resist doing wrong, though too much sensibility not to feel it in others. He had a great measure of pride, equally apt to resent neglect, and scorning to stoop to any meanness or flattery. A boundless friend; a bitter, but placable enemy.

His humour was satiric, though accompanied with a most compassionate heart. Indiscreet and abandoned to his passions, it seemed as if he despised or could bear no constraint; yet this want of government of himself was the more blameable, as nobody had greater command of resolution whenever he made a point of it. . . . One virtue he possessed in a singular degree—disinterestedness and contempt of money—if one may call that a virtue which was really a passion. In short, such was his promptness to dislike superiors, such his humanity to inferiors, that, considering how few men are of so firm a texture as not to be influenced by their situation, he thinks, if he may be allowed to judge of himself, that had either extreme of fortune been his lot, he should have made a good prince, but not a very honest slave.” No one was more alive than he was to his own fastidious, whimsical, and capricious disposition, and, in fact, he not unfrequently paraded it. He was certainly—like many of us—blind to some of his defects and inclined to overvalue some of his better qualities. In his work he was too fond of aiming at effect, but, for all that, the work itself was often meritorious. Gilly Williams, writing to George Selwyn October 19, 1764, says: “I can figure no being happier than Horry. *Monstrari digito prætereuntium* has been his whole aim. For this he has wrote, printed, and built. To this we owe Lord Herbert,\* and, I hope, in future shall owe much more diversion” (Jesse’s *Selwyn*, i. 310).

Williams was an intimate friend of Walpole’s, and well qualified to form an opinion. There may be nobler springs of action than the love of reputation, but the action which it initiated in this case produced some distinctly good results; and, when criticism has done its worst, the fact remains that his letters and memoirs are valuable historical works, while *The Castle of Otranto* heralded a new departure in fiction and Strawberry Hill a revival of taste in architecture.

It may be useful here to recall the chief events in his personal history. He was the third son of Sir Robert Walpole, and was born on September 24, 1717, O.S. (which

\* *The Biography of Lord Herbert of Cherbury*, printed by Walpole.



HORACE WALPOLE.





became October 5th under the New Style in 1752). He was educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge. He was appointed by his father to some sinecure posts, and in 1741 entered Parliament as member for Callington in Cornwall. He subsequently sat for Castle Rising and King's Lynn, till, in 1768, he retired from Parliamentary life altogether. He first settled at Strawberry Hill, near Twickenham, in 1747, where he built his famous "Castle," of which we hear so much in his letters. This was an undying delight to him, and he never wearied of adorning it inside and out. In his youth he travelled in Europe, and in later life paid several visits to Paris. He did a good deal of miscellaneous writing, some of which was printed at his private press at Strawberry Hill. By the death of his nephew George, Earl of Orford, in December, 1791, he succeeded to the title as fourth earl. For many years previously, however, he had suffered severely from gout, and his late honours were rather irksome than otherwise to him. His *Epitaphium vivi auctoris*, written in 1792, epitomises his feelings on the subject. It also betrays his anxiety to disclaim all idea of marrying Mary Berry.

An estate and an earldom at seventy-four!  
 Had I sought them or wish'd them, 'twould add one fear more—  
 That of making a countess at almost four-score.  
 But Fortune, who scatters her gifts out of season,  
 Though unkind to my limbs, has still left me my reason;  
 And whether she lowers or lifts me, I'll try  
 In the plain simple style I have liv'd in, to die:  
 For ambition too humble—for meanness too high.

He never took his seat in the House of Lords, and he died at 11, Berkeley Square on March 2, 1797.

All his weaknesses may be fully conceded, but we should not be misled into supposing that they concealed no elements of strength. He protested himself against this mistake being made, and would fain have his real friends know that under all the idleness of his spirits there were "some very serious qualities, such as warmth, gratitude, and sincerity" (letter to Lady Hervey, January 12, 1760). According to Macaulay, he was affectation, and nothing else: "His

features were covered by mask within mask. When the outer disguise of obvious affectation was removed, you were still as far as ever from seeing the real man" (*Macaulay's Essays*, "Horace Walpole"). This, however, is merely the language of envenomed prejudice, which the critic himself forgets a page or two later, when he declares that "his real tastes perpetually show themselves through the thin disguise." This is true: Walpole's affectations were usually quite transparent, and the real point in issue is, What was the actual character of the man whom they so imperfectly concealed? As to this we may learn a good deal from his own declarations. Macaulay adopts these so far as they are disparaging, but, *more suo*, discredits them whenever they speak to Walpole's advantage. They are scattered plentifully over his writings, and the earliest of all is very characteristic. In a letter of May 6, 1736, to George Montagu, he says, "I can't say I am sorry I never was quite a schoolboy." It might be added with truth that he was always something of a schoolgirl. He had no taste for the school games, or the fights with bargees, with which his fellow Etonians diverted themselves; and there was something distinctly feminine in the caprice, the impulsiveness, the inconsistency, and the defective sense of proportion which he often displayed. But if he had some of a woman's failings, he also possessed some feminine virtues. He has sometimes been described as selfish and unfeeling, but nothing could really be further from the truth. He was profoundly moved by the execution of Byng, with whom he was personally unacquainted, and for whose manners he had conceived a strong dislike. "I have spoken, and shall still speak of him," he says, "as a man most unjustly and wickedly put to death." But, indeed, his devotion to his mother and her memory, his staunch love and admiration for his rather uncongenial father, and his warm affection for his sister, and such friends as Conway, Mann, Chute, Selwyn, Gilly Williams, Lord Edgecumbe, Lady Aylesbury, Lady Ossory, Madame du Deffand, Mrs. Vesey, and Hannah More, are in themselves sufficient to refute this charge. It is curious and rather pathetic to observe

how imperfectly, in some instances, his affection was returned. He stood valiantly by Conway in his misfortunes, and had made him a generous offer of pecuniary assistance, yet when Conway was in power he completely, as we shall see, disregarded Walpole's interests. His affection for Sir Horace Mann is equally indisputable, for it shines through the whole forty-four years of their correspondence, sometimes taking form in almost feminine endearments. In 1775 Mann, by the death of his brother, succeeded to the family estate, and Walpole became eager for his return to England. Writing to Mann on December 26, 1775, he says, "I now confirm you in, and invest you with, your own estate. Linton is yours, and you are now your own master. . . . If you have been impatient for this letter, how anxious must I be too for your answer to my last ! But you cannot hesitate to take possession of your estate, to see your country again after an absence of forty years, to see a sister you love, and friends I think you love too. Why do I doubt? I will not—I will flatter myself that you will fix here. . . . Why do I doubt your coming? . . . How I long to have our correspondence finish!" And again, on January 28, 1776, "I am in so much haste now to have our correspondence end, that I no longer love even to write you a letter." Mann, however, could not be tempted to return, and seems to have treated his friend's enthusiasm rather ungraciously. Walpole, anyhow, was deeply hurt, and writes on February 15, 1776: "You have chilled me so thoroughly by the coldness of your answer, and by the dislike you express to England, that I shall certainly press you no more to come. I thought at least it would have cost you a struggle." But his affection soon reasserted itself, and he writes on April 17, 1776: "I am too well prepared for parting with everything to be ill-humouredly chagrined because one vision fails," and the correspondence is resumed without any further complaint. Even the Misses Berry did not always show him quite the consideration for which he reasonably hoped. He was then, of course, an old man, and it is vain to expect the young to return in full the affection which they receive from the old.

But, with all due allowances, these young ladies might sometimes have curtailed their long pleasure expeditions in deference to the entreaties of one to whom they owed so much.

The real kindness of his heart was also shown in his love for children and animals. With the former he would delight to romp in spite of his infirmities. In a letter to Lady Ossory of December 17, 1776, he describes a picture of a little girl "who looks so smiling and good-humoured, that one longs to catch her up in one's arms and kiss her till she is in a sweat and squalls." We hear also of a party of "two or three children, and two or three and forty dogs." "I generally prefer both," he remarks, "to what the common people call *Christians*" (letter to Lady Ossory, August 23, 1774). In the summer of 1760 "the dread of mad dogs raged like an epidemic," and Walpole loudly denounces the ruthless extermination which it provoked. He writes to Lord Strafford on September 4, 1760: "In London there is a more cruel campaign than that waged by the Russians: the streets are a very picture of the murder of the innocents—one drives over nothing but poor dead dogs! The dear, good-natured, sensible creatures! Christ! how can anybody hurt them? Nobody could but those Cherokees the English, who desire no better than to be hallo'd to blood:—one day Admiral Byng, the next Lord George Sackville, and to-day the poor dogs!"

When Lunardi, the aeronaut, made an ascent, taking a cat and some other animals in the balloon with him, Walpole wrote to Mann on September 30, 1784: "So far from respecting him as a Jason, I was very angry with him; he had full right to venture his own neck, but none to risk the poor cat." He used regularly to feed the birds and squirrels in his own garden, and he grew as foolish as an old woman over Madame du Deffand's detestable little dog "Ton-ton," which was sent to him, on his urgent request, after her death. In the excitement of the famous election of 1784, which broke up the Fox-North coalition, an atrocious piece of cruelty was perpetrated by the mob at Dover. As to this he writes to Mann on April 11, 1784:

"But me nothing has shocked so much as what I heard this morning; at Dover they roasted a poor *fox* alive by the most diabolic allegory!—a savage meanness that an Iroquois would not have committed. Base, cowardly wretches! How much nobler to have hurried to London and torn Mr. Fox himself piecemeal! I detest a country inhabited by such stupid barbarians. I will write no more to-night; I am in a passion."

We see the same spirit in his dislike of sport, partly because of its cruelty to animals, and partly on account of "what old writers mention as a recommendation . . . its being an image of war." He is quite ready, however, to laugh at his own lack of sporting tastes. He writes to Lady Ossory on December 4, 1771: "The weather is so fine, that forgetting it was December, and that I am not in the spring of my age, I went a-birds'-nesting this morning; I cannot say I had any sport; Rosette put up one robin red-breast; but we did not kill. The first rat or mouse, or such small deer that she runs down, I will take the liberty of sending your ladyship some venison." His hatred of war also sprang from the same humane tenderness, which was rooted deeply in his character, and which found fearless expression whenever its principles were violated. He regarded the wholesale warfare upon which the elder Pitt embarked as a blot on his greatness, and he was unsparing in his denunciation of any power, civil or ecclesiastical, which sacrificed life or liberty to its designs. His eager sympathy with the Americans in their struggle did not stifle his condemnation of their system of slavery. Writing to Mann on February 14, 1774, in reference to the threatened rupture with America, he says: "If all the black slaves were in rebellion I should have no difficulty in choosing my side, but I scarce wish perfect freedom to merchants who are the bloodiest of all tyrants. I should think the souls of the Africans would sit heavy on the swords of the Americans." Even his strong dislike of Roman Catholicism yielded to his hatred of slaughter. In a letter to Mann of June 14, 1780, he writes: "Many years ago I shocked Mrs. Macaulay by telling her that had I been

Luther and could have foreseen the woes I should occasion, I should have asked myself whether I was authorised to cause the death of three or four hundred thousand persons, that future millions might be advantaged. The Spartan matron despised my scruples." And again, in reference to the Gordon Riots, he writes to Mann on June 4, 1780: "I abhor such Protestantism as breathes the spirit of Popery, and commences a reformation by attempting a massacre." In the same strain he writes to Lady Ossory on August 10, 1785: "When those dear friends the Crown and the Church fall out, I adhere to the latter. Priests get their wealth or power by sense and address; monarchs by force and bloodshed; I am for sharpers against cut-throats." Liberty itself he thought might be bought too dearly. "No man living is more devoted to liberty than I am; yet blood is a terrible price to pay for it. A martyr to liberty is the noblest of characters; but to sacrifice the lives of others, though for the benefit of all, is a strain of heroism that I could never ambition" (letter to Miss Berry, July 9, 1789).

Macaulay declares that Walpole's "talk about liberty, whether he knew it or not, was from the beginning mere cant." His grounds, however, for this charge are fanciful, and it is opposed to Walpole's consistent professions throughout the whole of his life. From early youth he displayed a strong leaning towards Republicanism, but he is careful to explain what he means by it. Writing in 1754 he says: "My reflections led me early towards, I cannot quite say Republicanism, but to most limited Monarchy"—a principle, he adds, "which was much ridiculed. A Republican who should be mad, should be execrable enough to endeavour to imbrue his country in blood merely to remove the name of a monarch, deserves to excite horror; a quiet Republican who does not dislike to see the shadow of monarchy, like Banquo's ghost, fill the empty chair of state, that the ambitious, the murderer, the tyrant, may not aspire to it; in short, who approves the name of a king, when it excludes the essence, a man of such principles, I hope, may be a good man and an honest; and if he is that, what matters if he is ridiculous?" (*Memoirs of*

*George II.*, i. 376). . This was the attitude to which he substantially adhered from youth to age, and it is perfectly consistent with his deep detestation of the atrocities of the French Revolution. Macaulay misrepresents this altogether. He says: "His Republicanism, like the courage of a bully, or the love of a fribble, was strong and ardent when there was no occasion for it, and subsided when he had an opportunity of bringing it to the proof. As soon as the revolutionary spirit really began to stir in Europe, as soon as the hatred of kings became something more than a sonorous phrase, he was frightened into a fanatical royalist, and became one of the most extravagant alarmists of those wretched times." Walpole's view, however, was in no way peculiar to himself, but was shared by the bulk of all decent Englishmen. However keenly many of them may have sympathised with the first struggle of the French people for liberty, their sympathies, like his, were altogether alienated by the later abominations of the Revolution. Charles Fox was one of the very few leading men who consistently supported it in spite of its excesses, and the revulsion of feeling which Walpole experienced was experienced equally by so ardent a lover of liberty as Burke. Walpole writes to Lady Ossory on August 22, 1791: "Though with Mr. Fox I admire the destruction of despotism, I agree with Mr. Burke in abhorring the violence, cruelty, injustice, and absurdity of the National Assembly." He had a genuine hatred of tyranny, moral and political, and he insisted rightly enough that mobs as well as monarchs might be tyrannical. "Nobody is more devoted to liberty than I am. It is therefore that I abhor the National Assembly, whose outrageous violence has given, I fear, a lasting wound to the cause; for anarchy is despotism in the hands of thousands" (letter to Miss Berry, April 3, 1791). Again, "If Liberty is not tried by its peers, what matters whether there is one Nero or a million?" (letter to Lady Ossory, October 13, 1789).

It has been suggested that Macaulay's bitter dislike of Walpole was due to the revolt of the latter against the pretensions of official Whiggism as represented by the great

Whig houses—Cavendish, Russell, Pelham, and others. This may have added fuel to the flame, for Macaulay was an intolerant political partisan, and Walpole was by no means a politician of the *Say-ditto-to-Mr.-Gladstone* type. Writing to Lady Ossory on July 7, 1782, he says: "My Whiggism is founded on the constitution, not on two or three great families, who are forced to have virtue for a claim to their dignity, and any able man they can find to execute the office for them. My Whiggism is not confined to the Peak of Derbyshire." But we need hardly go to politics for an explanation of this dislike, which may readily be found in the sharply contrasted characters of the two men. Walpole's indolent, fastidious, effeminate temperament was intensely distasteful to the strenuous, combative, and essentially masculine vigour of Macaulay. To him it bespoke nothing but "an unhealthy and disorganised mind"; and, had the two been contemporaries, Walpole, who detested the very atmosphere diffused by strong and assertive natures—such as Johnson's, for instance—would have returned the dislike with interest.

It must be admitted, however, that in politics Walpole showed at his very worst. His own cynical admission that he "had a propensity to faction, and looked on the mischief of civil disturbances as a lively amusement" (*Memoirs of George III.*, iii. 159), may be to some extent an exaggeration, but it shows clearly the spirit in which he approached matters political. A burning desire, in the first place, to chastise the enemies of his father, and later to avenge the injuries done to his friend Field-Marshal Conway, was probably a stronger, though hardly a worthier motive to him. In 1764 Conway had voted against the Government on the question of the illegality of General Warrants, which had been unscrupulously employed by Grenville. For this act he was promptly deprived of his regiment and of his situation in the King's bedchamber. Walpole was furious, and vowed revenge. In a letter of April 21, 1764, on the subject to Conway, he says: "I write to you with a very bad headache; I have passed a night for which George Grenville and the Duke of Bedford shall pass many an uneasy



one! . . . In the meantime let me beg you, in the most earnest and sincere of all professions, to suffer me to make your loss as light as it is in my power to make it. I have six thousand pounds in the funds; accept all, or what part you want. Do not imagine I will be put off with a refusal. The retrenchment of my expenses which I shall from this hour commence, will convince you that I mean to replace your fortune as far as I can. When I thought you did not want it, I had made another disposition. You have ever been the dearest person to me in the world. You have shown that you deserve to be so."

Then followed months of the most ingenious and unwearying intrigue on Walpole's part against the Government, in which, however, he was seriously hampered by the disorganised condition and internal rivalries of the Opposition. At length, largely as the result of his exertions, the Grenville Ministry was dismissed, and on July 8, 1765, the Rockingham Administration took office, with Conway as one of the Secretaries of State. Walpole, however, was left out in the cold on this accession of his friends to power, and he resented it bitterly. His resentment was partly justifiable, and partly rather contemptible. He had repeatedly informed his colleagues in Opposition that he would never personally hold office, and he undoubtedly had no desire for political position. But his income depended on the salaries of his sinecure posts, and these had already been threatened. Indeed, in 1762 Henry Fox had stopped his payments for some months as an act of revenge. Walpole was naturally desirous of seeing these placed on a secure footing, and for this he cannot be blamed. But he also had secretly hoped that, in spite of his *nolo episcopari* protestations, some office would be offered him, and when no such offer was made his vanity was deeply hurt. The story shall be told in his own words. "I had entered into opposition on the view of the violent measures, and still more violent designs of the Court. Personal dislike to the Bedford faction had inflamed my natural warmth, and the oppression exercised on Mr. Conway had fixed in me an unalterable desire of overturning that Administration. Not the smallest view of

self-interest had entered into my imagination. On the contrary, I risked an easy ample fortune with which I was thoroughly contented. When I found unjust power exerted to wrong me, I am not ashamed to say I flattered myself that, if ever our party were successful, I should obtain to have the payments of my place settled on some foundation that should not expose me to the caprice or wanton tyranny of every succeeding Minister. . . . My wish of making this independence perfectly easy I had hinted to Mr. Conway during our opposition. He received it with silence. It was not in my nature to repeat such a hint. As disinterestedness was my ruling passion, I did hope that on the change some considerable employment would be offered to me, which my vanity would have been gratified in refusing" (*Memoirs of George III.*, ii. 149).

It is impossible to feel much sympathy with pettiness of this kind; but with regard to the settlement of his salaries he had a reasonable ground of complaint. Possibly he ought to have been more explicit in the expression of his wishes, but Conway certainly showed a want of gratitude to his faithful friend. Walpole, with much moderation, acquits the leaders of the party (whom he had either neglected or slighted) of blame in the matter. "They," he says, "were excusable in proposing nothing for me, when they found nothing demanded for me by my own intimate friend and near relation. He must be supposed to know my mind best; if he was silent, what called on them to be more solicitous for my interest? But what could excuse this neglect in Mr. Conway? For him I had sacrificed everything; for him I had been injured, oppressed, calumniated. The foundation of his own fortune, and almost every step of his fortune, he owed solely to me. How thoroughly soever he knew my sentiments, was a compliment at least not due to me. Whatever was due to me, much or little, he totally forgot it; and so far from once endeavouring to secure my independence, in his whole life after he never once mentioned it. I had too much spirit to remind him of it, though he has since frequently vaunted to me his own

independence. Such failure of friendship, or, to call it by its truer name, such insensibility, could not but shock a heart at once so tender and so proud as mine."

This sordid little incident, which is worthy of the tortuous politics of that age, exposes some of Walpole's essential weaknesses, but it testifies emphatically to the warmth of his affections. Indeed, he speedily forgave, though he never forgot, the neglect, and soon afterwards we find him inducing Conway to use his new power for the benefit of another friend, Sir Horace Mann, who was raised to the rank of envoy.

"About his serious passages," says a modern critic, "there is generally a false ring," but this judgment, I think, is somewhat too broadly stated. It is true of some of his elaborate declamations, in which he could not resist the temptation of talking fine; but it cannot be said of the deeper reflections which appear in his writings. It has been rather the fashion to represent him as an indolent and cynical sceptic, whose toleration of serious opinion was merely the toleration of indifference. But this is a curious misconception; for on many religious and philosophical questions his opinions, whether sound or unsound, were earnest and courageous. He was frankly unorthodox, but in no sense an atheist. His friend Hannah More, who was greatly concerned at his rejection of orthodoxy, declared that she "never heard a sentence from him which savoured of 'infidelity.'" And this was true, for he always proclaimed his faith in a Divine Ruler of the world. Moreover, in considering his irreligion, we must bear in mind the character of the current religion of the day. Mrs. Oliphant has described the age of Wesley as one in which "the good men were inoperative, the bad men were dauntless; the vast crowd between the two, which forms the bulk of humanity, felt no stimulus towards religion, and drowsed in comfortable content." Such vitality as was left in the Church was occupied entirely with doctrine, and even its doctrine was saturated with the Deism which it professed to oppose. For religion of this kind Walpole had an honest scorn, and he insisted on his right to his own convictions.

"I never try to make converts," he says, "but expect and claim to enjoy my own opinion, and other people may enjoy theirs. It is my Bill of Rights. If a religious system be inspired by Heaven itself, what human effort can injure it? Intolerance is, *ipso facto*, a proof of falsehood" (*Walpoliana*, 74). A Theist rather than a Deist, he detested and repudiated all the claims of Materialism, and clung tenaciously to the belief in a divine scheme of things, under which all temporary evils would ultimately be righted. "Atheism I dislike. It is gloomy, uncomfortable; and in my eye, unnatural and irrational. It certainly requires more credulity to believe that there is no God than to believe that there is. This fair creation, those magnificent heavens, the fruit of matter and chance! O! impossible" (*Walpoliana*, 75). Again, in a letter to Mann (May 17, 1775), he writes: "I have no doubt but the real miseries of life—I mean those that are unmerited and unavoidable—will be compensated to the sufferers. Tyrants are a proof of an hereafter. Millions of men cannot be formed for the sport of a cruel child." He gave short shrift to overbearing ecclesiastical pretensions, whether of priest or presbyter; and while upholding religion, he held in light esteem much of the theology which encumbered it. "Exalted notions of Church matters are contradictions in terms to the lowliness and humility of the Gospel. There is nothing sublime but the Divinity. Nothing sacred but His work" (letter to W. Cole, July 12, 1778). "Sects," he exclaims to Hannah More, "are the bane of charity, and have deluged the world with blood"; and there is little to choose, in his opinion, between Calvin, Wesley, and the Pope. "A Gothic Church or a convent fills one with romantic dreams—but for the Mysterious, the Church in the abstract, it is a jargon that means nothing, or a great deal too much, and I reject it and its apostles, from Athanasius to Bishop Keene" \*

\* Dr. Edmund Keene, who was Bishop of Chester, and subsequently of Ely, had, according to Walpole, received a living of £700 a year from Sir Robert Walpole on condition that he should marry one of Sir Robert's illegitimate daughters. This excellent divine took the living, but declined to marry the lady.

(letter to Mason, July 16, 1778). At the same time he never failed in his reverence to the deeper elements of religion. He writes to Mason on November 8, 1783: "Be assured that I never trifle on so solemn and dear an interest as the immortality of the soul; though I do not subscribe to every childish and fantastic employment that silly people have chalked out for it. There is no word in any language expressive enough for the adoration and gratitude we owe to the Author of All Good. An eternity of praises and thanks is due to Him; but are we thence to infer that *that* is the sole tribute in which He will delight, and the sole occupation He destines for beings on whom He has bestowed thought and reason?" His dislike to Roman Catholicism sprang from his love of freedom. "You know," he writes to Mann on November 8, 1784, "that I have ever been adverse to toleration of an intolerant religion." But he nevertheless condemns the violent suppression of it. In a letter to Lady Ossory of August 10, 1785, he says: "Don't imagine that I am changing sides, Madam, because I have some *High Church* qualms. It is laudable to suppress convents; but it ought to be done by forbidding any more persons to be professed. It is inhuman to turn those adrift who either entered conscientiously or are too old to seek a new livelihood by new professions." He honoured the French priests who "preferred beggary to perjury, and have died, or fled, to preserve the integrity of their consciences." And indeed he respected "conscientious martyrs of all sects, communions, and parties."

He was a foe to all the superstitions—many of them gross enough—which throve amid the decay of genuine religious belief. Writing to Hannah More on September 22, 1788, about a pretended exorcist, he says: "How shocking to suppose that the Omnipotent Creator of worlds delegates His power to a momentary insect to eject supernatural spirits that He had permitted to infest another insect, and had permitted to vomit blasphemies against Himself." During the earthquake scare of 1750 the clergy insisted that the earthquakes were divine judgments on the wicked-

ness of the people. Two shocks having occurred at the interval of a month, an idea got about that there would be a third shock after a similar interval, which would swallow up London. Many people of fashion fled into the country to avoid the impending doom: upon which Walpole observes, "I have advised many who are going to keep their next earthquake in the country to take the bark for it, it is so periodical" (letter to Mann, April 2, 1750).

Macaulay remarks that "The conformation of his [Walpole's] mind was such that whatever was little seemed to him great, and whatever was great seemed to him little." This, however, is an extravagant misrepresentation. As we have seen, he was by no means indifferent to things great, and it would be truer to say that he could always see the greatness of things little. For it is just the trifling details on which he so skilfully seized which give to his descriptions not only their charm, but their vitality. Sir Leslie Stephen points out that, while ordinary historians reduce our ancestors to mere mechanical mummies, "in Walpole's pages they are still living flesh and blood." If, he says, we excise from the proper decorous history books all that comes from Walpole, "the history sinks to the level of the solid Archdeacon Cox."

It is difficult to select from the embarrassing wealth of instances; but, to take one almost at random: how vividly does his story of Lady Caroline Petersham's harum-scarum party at Vauxhall picture for us a scene from the fashionable life of the day! (Letter to George Montagu, June 23, 1750.) Equally bright is his description of its later rival Ranelagh, so magnificent that "the floor is all of beaten princes." Everything which he depicts glows with the same illuminating touch. We seem almost to see before us Lady Ossory, the beautiful and accomplished; Lady Coventry, passing fair, but stupid and unrefined withal; George Selwyn, with his demure face and upturned eyes; Charles Fox, his blazing follies and his brilliant parts; Madame du Deffand, his "old fairy"; the Misses Berry, his "dear both"; Gray, with his strange, morose manners; Johnson—"Demogorgon"—wrangling and bullying among

the Blue-stockings; Mrs. Montagu giving him the coldest of shoulders; Boswell, "the ape of most of his faults without a grain of his sense"; Wraxall popping in here, there, and everywhere in a tireless pursuit of notoriety, which makes Walpole predict "that he will come to an untimely beginning in the House of Commons"; and a hundred more. "Mr. Crawford is arrived, *though* he did promise to come—to make amends, he has not kept one engagement since" (letter to Lady Ossory, September 16, 1775). Here we get one of the caprices of "Fish" Crawford in a nutshell. And Walpole himself—not the least interesting member of the coterie—is not spared by his own pen, from which we learn the details of his hopes, fears, tastes, prejudices, and even his personal appearance. We grow quite familiar with "the long lean creature" and his fantastic ways. "In my best days Mr. Winnington said I tripped like a peewit; and, if I do not flatter myself, my march at present is more like a dabchick's" (letter to Lady Ossory, August 18, 1775). Again, "It is the *bon ton* now to die. One can't show one's face without being a death's-head. Mrs. Bethel and I are come strangely into fashion; but true critics in mode object to our having underjaws, and maintain that we are not dead *comme il faut*" (letter to George Montagu, April 20, 1756). Even his gout cannot quench the lightness of spirit which makes him bid Montagu think of him as "Ariel the sprite in a slit shoe," and which five years earlier had sent him out into the night, in his slippers and gold-embroidered dressing-gown, to look at a fire in Bury Street. Hurrying through the darkness he stepped into a water-pipe which had been broken open, with the result that his appearance on his return was, as he describes it, "party per pale mud and gold." This must be a slip for "party per fess"; and the slip is worth noticing because it is one of the countless little errors which conflict with the suggestion that Walpole carefully prepared his letters with a view to their publication. A division "per pale" of mud and gold is almost inconceivable under the circumstances. But "party per fess gold and mud" would be exactly the effect of his

wading waist-deep in the mire; and so good a herald as Walpole could hardly have failed to correct the slip if he had revised the letter.

In his private life he was strictly honest in a dishonest age, and strictly temperate in a society where debauchery was rampant. He was charitable in an unostentatious way, and he had a careful regard for the decencies of life. He was disgusted with the flippant vulgarity of many of the Methodist preachers, which some of the orthodox were inclined to imitate. "God keeps a day" said an orthodox preacher named Ashton, "but sees little company." He condemned the freedom with which the French were accustomed to criticise the Bible in the presence of their servants. He rejoiced in the suppression of prize-fighting, "in which we had horribly resembled the most barbarous and most polite nations," the prohibition of indecent prints, and the reformed morals of the stage. This reform, however, as he points out, affected the playwrights rather than the plays. "Our stage grew chaste; indecency dared not show its face in a modern comedy, though it still remained in possession of the old ones; and, what is more remarkable, having been tolerated when women went to the theatre in masks, preserved its hold now that they went without them" (*Memoirs of George II.*, iii. 99). He often affected cosmopolitan sympathies, but at heart he was an Imperialist, though he recognised that his politics were inconsistent with his philosophy. In a letter to Lady Ossory of January 8, 1780, he writes: "My first object in politics is to demolish the French Marine. My Whig blood cannot bear to part with a drop of the Empire of the ocean. Like the Romans, I would have Rome domineer over the world and be free at home. The old man in me is sensible there is little equity in this, and that a good patriot is a bad citizen of the world; but a citizen of the world, as the world is constituted, would be the most useless animal in creation." The political ideal which he desired for England was a state of equilibrium between the Crown, the Lords, and the Commons. If this were disturbed by the undue preponderance of any one of these estates, he would have



the other two combine to counteract it (letter to Lady Ossory, December 9, 1790). Warburton, speaking of his letters, remarks that "their vivid descriptions, their strong common sense, and their searching knowledge of human nature, leave nothing but truthfulness to be desired." His portraits, no doubt, are coloured by his likes and dislikes; and, as has been well pointed out, his criticisms are often based on the *last* acts of the person criticised. To this extent his descriptions are not always trustworthy, but they are certainly not systematically untruthful. Indeed, criticism may be almost disarmed by the candour with which he lays bare his failings. His character, though full of frailties, was not fundamentally false, and it contained much that was lovable, much that was honest, much that was almost great.

## IX. THE LIGHTER SIDE OF A SERIOUS WOMAN (HANNAH MORE)

**F**EW historical figures have come down to us more awfully arrayed in the full terrors of respectability than that of Hannah More. Prim and grim, the stern apostle of a starched decorum, the very avatar of Mrs. Grundy, a sour Sabbatarian, whose narrow austerity branded every innocent pleasure as impious and threw a chill even over that benevolence for which she was justly renowned. This is the sort of opinion which is generally entertained in the twentieth century about the half-forgotten celebrity of the eighteenth. But erroneous as it may be, the error is pardonable, for the same view seems to have been shared by some of her own contemporaries. In a letter to Wilberforce, in 1792, she tells him, with evident amusement, of a lady "who had given a very great children's ball," where, "at the upper end of the room, in an elevated place, was dressed out a figure to represent *me*, with a large rod in my hand prepared to punish such naughty doings." It is hard to realise that the original of this distorted picture was a bright particular star in a brilliant and cultivated society; a woman who in youth had mixed in all the gaiety of the fashionable world, while resolutely keeping clear of its vices, and who sacrificed her later years to an unwearying benevolence whose tenderest care was the welfare of children.

Her father, Jacob More, who came from Harleston, in Norfolk, had expected to succeed to an estate at Wenhamston, in Suffolk, worth £8,000 a year; but his claim was contested successfully, and the litigation ruined him. He then migrated to Bristol, where he became a supervisor of Excise, and was subsequently appointed by Lord Botsford to the

mastership of a school at Fishponds, near Stapleton, in Gloucestershire. Here he married Mary, the daughter of John Grace, a farmer in the neighbourhood. Five daughters were born of this marriage—Mary, Elizabeth, Sarah, Hannah, and Martha. He was himself a Churchman and a Tory, but he came of a sturdy Puritan stock, and Hannah's grandmother used to tell of midnight meetings for worship held secretly in her father's house, while one of the congregation guarded the entrance with a drawn sword. Hannah was born on February 2, 1745. She, too, was a Churchwoman, but in later life the Puritan element showed itself strongly in her. Almost from infancy she took a lively interest in learning, and was taught Latin by her father, rather reluctantly, as he had a vigorous dislike for superior women. Hannah must certainly have caused the good man considerable uneasiness on this score. She was for ever scribbling essays and poems on odd scraps of paper, and her favourite game was to make a chair into a carriage and then pretend that she was driving to London to call on bishops and booksellers. It is sufficiently marvellous that a child with such appalling tastes should have failed to develop into an arrant prig; and, truth to tell, her escape was rather a narrow one. Soon, however, an exceptional opportunity gave her intellectual faculties a most welcome chance. In 1757 her eldest sister, Mary, who was then twenty one, with her sisters Elizabeth and Sarah, opened a ladies' school in Trinity Street, Bristol, taking Hannah and her younger sister, Patty, who were then respectively twelve and ten years of age, as pupils. The school was a great success, and under her sisters' care Hannah quickly became a highly cultivated girl. In her seventeenth year she wrote a pastoral drama called *The Search after Happiness*, which, though it smacks of the schoolroom, will easily bear comparison with some of her later work. The strangest episode, however, in her early life was still to come.

Somewhere about the year 1767 she made the acquaintance of a Mr. Turner, of Belmont, two of whose cousins were pupils at her sisters' school. He was a wealthy

bachelor, considerably older than herself, and the owner of a fine estate near Flax Bourton, in Somersetshire. She is described as being at this time an exceedingly pretty girl, with delicate features and beautiful eyes. These characteristics she retained to the end of her life, as the portrait of her by Pickersgill, in the National Portrait Gallery, clearly shows. She became a constant visitor at Belmont, and in due course of time received from Mr. Turner a proposal of marriage, which she accepted. She withdrew from her connection with the school, and made all preparations for her wedding. This, however, never took place. Three times was the day fixed, and as often, for some unintelligible reason, postponed by Mr. Turner. His affection for her seems to have been sincere, but he was a man of a curious and rather gloomy disposition, and his strange conduct may possibly be referred to some mental perversity. At last her friends interfered, and insisted on the engagement being broken off. Turner then offered to marry her whenever she wished, but her friends were firm and the engagement came to an end. He was very anxious to make a settlement upon her, and though for some time she declined to entertain the proposal, she was finally persuaded by Sir James Stonehouse to accept an annuity of £200. This unfortunate affair did not interfere with the friendship and respect which Mr. Turner continued to feel for her, and at his death he left her a legacy of £1,000. But it probably left its mark on her; and though she subsequently received two offers of marriage, she declined them both.

It was, however, in another and happier way a turning-point in her life. The annuity gave her an independence which enabled her to choose her own career, and in or about the year 1773, when she was about twenty-eight, in company with her sisters Sally and Patty, she made her first visit to London. Her deplorable habit of leaving her letters undated makes it extremely difficult to follow her movements; but she does not seem to have entered much into London society till 1774. She was then introduced to Garrick, whose interest in her had already been



*Hannah More.*

LONDON: EDWARD ARNOLD.



kindled by a letter of hers describing his performance of King Lear. They soon became fast friends, and he introduced her to the Royal Family. Through him, too, she became acquainted with Sir Joshua Reynolds, Johnson, Burke, Mrs. Montagu, and the best of the intellectual people of the times. But her success was not limited to intellectual circles only, for fashionable society also yielded to the charm of this brilliant and beautiful woman, and welcomed her into its midst. This new life was a sheer delight to her, and she entered into it with a keen zest. Johnson, in his Johnsonian way, alternately petted and rated her, but his undisguised admiration of her provoked a good deal of amusement among her intimates. For this information we are largely indebted to her sister Sally. But Hannah herself was rather proud of the flirtation. In 1776 she writes to one of her sisters: "I had the happiness to carry Dr. Johnson home from Hill Street, though Mrs. Montagu publicly declared she did not think it prudent to trust us together, with such a declared affection on both sides. She said she was afraid of a Scotch elopement." Sally was the wag of the family. In later life Sir James Stonehouse made a collection of her witticisms, to which he gave the name of *Sallians*. She published a couple of successful novels, on the strength of which she was nicknamed "Prosey" in the family circle, Hannah's nickname being "Poetry." In 1776, soon after the appearance of *Sir Eldred of the Bower*, Hannah's first publication, Sally writes to a friend: "If a wedding should take place before our return, don't be surprised—between the mother of Sir Eldred and the father of my much-loved Irene; nay, Mrs. Montagu says if tender words are the precursors of connubial engagements, we may expect great things; for it is nothing but 'child'—'little fool'—'love'—and 'dearest.'"

Johnson having asked about the Bristol school, Sally gave him rather a racy account of its origin and growth. Whereupon he exclaimed, "I love you both—I love you all five—I never was at Bristol—I will come on purpose to see you—what! five women live happily together!—I will come and see you—I have spent a happy evening—I am

glad I came—God for ever bless you! you live lives to shame duchesses.”

It is worth observing, perhaps, that two years later Johnson was making the same sort of fuss over Fanny Burney—his “dear little Burney”—and her *Evelina*. The only mention, so far as I am aware, which Hannah makes of this young person is decidedly frigid. “This Evelina [*i.e.*, Fanny] is an extraordinary girl; she is not more than twenty, of a very retired disposition; and how she picked up her knowledge of nature and low life, her *Brangtons* and her *St. Giles’s* gentry, is astonishing.”

Hannah has been accused of flattering Johnson, chiefly on the strength of a vague statement of Boswell’s. Boswell, however, was scarcely an impartial judge, having once been sharply rebuked by Hannah for accosting her in a tipsy condition at “a small and very choice party at Bishop Shipley’s.” Moreover, it is clear from a letter of Sally’s that on the occasion referred to Hannah and the Doctor were simply chaffing each other, and trying “who could pepper the highest.” This soon became a recognised form of badinage between them; and Hannah, writing in 1780 of a party where she had met Johnson, says, “he scolded me heartily, as usual, when I differed from him in opinion, and, as usual, laughed when I flattered him.” “I was very bold,” she adds, “in combating some of his darling prejudices.” Indeed, she never hesitated to challenge the Doctor’s opinions when they seemed to her erroneous. She tells us of an occasion when “Johnson was in full song,” and she “quarrelled with him sadly” because he could see no merit in the *Allegro*, *Penoso*, or *Lycidas*. Again, Sally writes in 1776: “Dr. Johnson and Hannah last night had a violent quarrel, till at length laughter ran so high on all sides, that argument was confounded in noise; the gallant youth at one in the morning set us down at our lodgings.” These midnight frolics seem to have been rather frequent, as Hannah, about the same time, writes: “Keeping bad company leads to all other bad things. I have got the headache to-day, by raking out so late with that gay libertine Johnson.” The fame of her accomplishments soon spread. Garrick, declaring that the



talents of all the Muses were combined in her, nicknamed her "Nine." An Oxford wit, when she was visiting Dr. Kennicott at Christchurch, carried the compliment a step further:—

Muses nine we had before,  
But Kennicott has shown us—More.

Even the politicians of the street paid tribute to her reputation; and during the Bristol election of 1774 gave "three cheers for Sappho" outside her house.

The friendship between her and Garrick was warm and enduring. He paid her the compliment of inviting her to his "sour crout" parties, where learned men were always to be met; he helped her with her dramatic writings, and once, when she was kept to the house by illness, he brought her, to her immense gratification, a special dinner in his coach. "Tell it not in Epic, or in Lyric," she writes, "that the great Roscius rode with a stewpan of minced meat with him in the coach for my dinner." He was probably the chief cause of her early attraction to the theatre, for she never went to one after his death; and in later life she felt some difficulty in reconciling her condemnation of the stage with the fact that formerly she had not only frequented the theatre but had written for it. Her defence is not very convincing. She explains that she had at one time cherished the delusive hope that the stage might be made a powerful moral influence. She also draws a distinction between seeing and reading a dramatic composition, holding that the objections which touch the one are not equally applicable to the other.

From 1774 to 1779 was probably the happiest period of her life, though it was already faintly clouded, partly by her indifferent health and partly by the religious scruples which so strongly coloured her later years. At her first entrance into London society she seems to have taken all it offered—dinners, routs, assemblies, and, apparently, even the more frivolous festivities—

When Almack's doors wide open stand,  
And the gay partner's proffered hand  
Courts to the dance.

The reaction began soon, though it was not at first very violent. She still frequented theatres, but for some not very obvious reason she disapproved of the opera. In 1775 she went to her first opera, and emphatically declared that it should be her last. "Going to the opera," she writes, "like getting drunk, is a sin that carries its own punishment with it, and that a very severe one." Her personal experience of intoxication can hardly have been large; but perhaps the remark must not be pressed too severely. The truth of the matter probably was that, being utterly indifferent to music, she was thoroughly bored by the opera, and thus easily persuaded herself that it was sinful. In some other ways, too, the strictness of her ideas precluded her from sharing fully in the pursuits of fashionable society. In the first place she never played cards. She speaks of herself and Mrs. Montagu as being "the only two monsters in creation who never touch a card (and laughed at it [*sic*] enough for it we are)." She was also a very rigid Sabbatarian. One Sunday, when staying with some friends at Farnborough in company with Garrick, Lord Bathurst, the Kennicotts, and others, she was alarmed by preparations being made for music. "But before I had time to feel uneasy, Garrick turned round and said, 'Nine, you are a Sunday woman; retire to your room—I will recal [*sic*] you when the music is over.'" She even declined to dine out on Sunday, being, as Sally put it, "of the Christian faction." To such extreme lengths were her pious scruples carried that she objected to the use of expressions like the "christening" of a ship, the "salvation" of the country, the "ascension" of a balloon, on account of the religious associations which had gathered round them. But if she withdrew to some extent from more frivolous amusements, she found ample compensation in the Conversation Parties promoted by Mrs. Montagu, the founder of the Blue-stocking Society, where, in her own phrase, "the conversation was sprightly but serious." At these she would meet, as she declared, "half the wits of the age"; and they were a real delight to her, though she shrewdly observed the difficulties arising from so many suns trying to shine at once. Into this sort

of dissipation she plunged freely enough. She thus describes one of her busy days in 1779: "The moment I had breakfasted I went to Apsley House: there I staid till near two: I then made insignificant visits till four, when I went to Audley Street [Mrs. Boscawen's] to dinner, where I staid till eight, and from thence went to spend the evening at Mrs. Vesey's, where there was a small assembly of about thirty people, and all clever." Sometimes also she was invited to Mrs. Delany's "select parties, never exceeding eight" which are "not elsewhere to be equalled." They usually included "My friend Horace Walpole," Lady Bute, Lady Leicester, Lady Wallingford, and Mrs. Boscawen. "They are all very far advanced in life and knowledge," she adds, "and it is a great honour for such a young nobody as I am to be admitted." We hear that Mrs. Vesey keeps out dunces "because she never has cards"; and Mrs. Montagu frankly told Garrick that she never invited "idiots" to her house. These intellectual gatherings may sound rather formidable to the ordinary individual, but the skill of Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Vesey contrived to rob them of some of their terrors. Before the Blue-stockings came upon the scene social intercourse of the more sober kind was practically limited to a forbidding function known as the Circle. Here every speaker had the whole company for an audience, and under this ordeal conversation either died in agonies altogether or became as stilted as a lecture.

Where the dire Circle keeps its station,  
Each common phrase is an oration.

Lady Mary Coke tells how once, at the Duchess of Argyll's, when the Circle was very full, the eccentric Duchess of Queensberry tried to break up its formality by carrying two chairs into the middle, to the great displeasure of the dowagers.

Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Vesey put an end to this by breaking up their parties into detached groups, wherein talk could flow easily through natural channels. In *The Bas Bleu* Hannah gives a spirited description of these assemblies,

too long to be quoted in full, but a few lines will give an idea of it :—

Here sober Duchesses are seen,  
Chaste Wits, and Critics void of spleen;  
Physicians fraught with real science,  
And Whigs and Tories in alliance;  
Poets, fulfilling Christian duties,  
Just Lawyers, reasonable Beauties;  
Bishops who preach, and Peers who pay,  
And Countesses who seldom play.

In such company as this the talk ought to have been good, and, if Hannah can be trusted, it was. It would be difficult to better the following account of a conversation between congenial spirits, which charms, not only by the spoken word, but by the unspoken thought which it reveals :—

What lively pleasure to divine  
The thought implied, the hinted line,  
To feel Allusion's artful force,  
And trace the image to its source.  
Quick Memory blends the scattered rays,  
Till Fancy kindles at the blaze;  
The works of ages start to view,  
And ancient wit elicits new.

Moreover, she truly insists on the value of that sometimes neglected element of conversation, the art of listening.

Yet if one gracious power refuse  
Her gentle influence to infuse;  
If she withhold the magic spell,  
Nor in the social circle dwell;  
In vain shall listening crowds approve,  
They'll praise you, but they will not love.  
What is this power you're loth to mention,  
This charm, this witchcraft? 'Tis Attention.

*The Bas Bleu* attracted a great deal of attention, and in April, 1784, we find Hannah busy making a copy of it for George III.

Hannah, without doubt, was an excellent talker, but

her wit was diffused through her conversation as a whole, rather than concentrated in the *bons mots* so dear to the "Wits" of a generation before her. She writes to Mrs. Kennicott: "I was here under violent temptation to make a pun; but my prudence got the better of my wit; do not think it was because my wit was weak, but because my prudence was strong." Puns, indeed, were hardly her strong point. Walpole once at a party proposed that any one who mentioned Ministers or Opposition should be fined half-a-crown. Hannah added "that whoever even mentioned *pitcoal*, or a *foxskin muff*, should be considered as guilty"; rather a sorry joke. Her remark on hearing of the rejection of the Catholic Bill in the House of Lords by a majority of thirty-nine was much better. "Then we have beaten the Romanists," she said, "with forty stripes save one."

She seems to have been a clever workwoman and to have won quite a reputation for the stockings and aprons which she made. She once sent a pair of the former to Mrs. W. W. Pepys for her husband with a letter entitled "The Bas Blanc," which describes the stockings in terms, so to speak, of literature. "My chief care has been," she writes, "to unite the two great essentials of composition, ease and strength. I do not pretend to have paid any great attention to the passions, and yet I hope my work will not be found deficient in warmth or softness, but these will be better felt than expressed. Now and then, partly from negligence and partly from temerity, I have broken the thread of my narrative, but have pieced it so happily that none but the eye of a professor, which looks into the interior, will detect it. . . . After all, I wish the work may not be thought too long; but of this he to whose use it is dedicated will be the best judge. His feelings must determine, and that is a decision from which there lies no appeal.—L'AMIE DES ENFANS."

Observe the signature; a gratuitous testimony, as it were, to that love of children which a later generation so strangely overlooked.

She objected to card-playing on moral and religious

grounds, but she also deplored its anti-social effect of paralysing the conversation in which she took so much delight. Horace Walpole bitterly resented the invasion of Whist. Writing to Mann, December 23, 1742, he says: "The only token of this new kingdom is a woman riding on a beast, which is the mother of abominations, and the name on the forehead is Whist." Hannah also laments that society had been

over-run  
By Whist, that desolating Hun,

adding that this, with Faro and Quadrille, had injured not only morals but manners.

If noxious Faro's baneful spright,  
With rites infernal rule the night,  
The group absorb'd in play and pelf,  
Venus might call her doves herself.

We are suffering now from a certain recrudescence of the same fever, but Hannah's reproach would be no longer in point. Venus nowadays would not require her doves to be called at all; she would prefer to stay and play Bridge. It is obvious, however, that Hannah and her sister Blue-stockings have over-stated their case. It was probably true enough that the ordinary gambler of the day was not strong in intellectual tastes, but the names of Fox, Pitt, Hare, Fitzpatrick, and Storer alone are sufficient to disprove the suggestion that every gambler was a dunce or an idiot.

Hannah's first play, *Percy*, appeared in 1778, and, incredible as it may seem to a modern reader, was a great success, bringing her in nearly £750. Two subsequent tragedies, *The Fatal Falsehood* and *The Inflexible Captive*, were not so successful; and her publisher, Cadell, told her she was "too good a Christian for an author." This criticism was curiously falsified in the future; for nearly all her subsequent works had large sales, and she died worth £30,000.

The death of Garrick, on January, 20, 1779, was a great shock to her life, and it produced an impression from which she never fully recovered. She spent a great deal of time subsequently with his widow, helping her with many tender ministrations, which were all the more welcome as Mrs. Garrick was a foreigner and a Roman Catholic. Hannah did not give up society altogether, but she began to drop its more exacting festivities. She writes from Mrs. Garrick's house to one of her sisters: "My way of life is very different from what it used to be; you must not, therefore, expect much entertainment from my letters." Her health, too, which was never strong, began to trouble her, and she found the whirl of society becoming oppressive. She illustrates this by a story of young Lord Falmouth, whose mother, Mrs. Boscawen, said that she wished him to fall in love. To which he replied that it must be with a country girl, for London women did not stand still long enough for a man to fall in love with them.

To this period belongs the commencement of the most interesting friendship of Hannah's life, her friendship with Horace Walpole. This is usually placed in 1781; but it must have been somewhat earlier, for, as we have seen, she writes in 1780 of "her friend Horace Walpole." This letter, too, was evidently written quite early in the year, for it mentions that Beauclerk (who died in March, 1780) was then dying. Walpole was then about sixty-two, and growing more fastidious every year. He would not have tolerated for a moment the company of any one who was wholly priggish or austere, and his warm affection for Hannah shows conclusively that she was neither. This friendship, too, was extremely wholesome for her, Walpole being just the corrective needed to temper the religious prejudices which were beginning to throw a chill over her life. But to her Evangelical friends it appeared as a deplorable blot on her scutcheon. Roberts, the editor of her *Memoirs*, is much exercised by it. "It is," he says, "on such a subject a painful employment to particularise, but the long and animated correspondence carried on between

Hannah More and Horace Walpole, afterwards Earl of Orford, seems to require some explanation, and perhaps apology." He does not, in fact, attempt either one or the other. He merely abuses Walpole in this fashion: "It had been well if that pretender to good epistolary writing had erred only in supposing it to consist in a vacant vivacity of expression, the disdain of propriety, grace, and grammar, and a triumphant neglect of those rules of decent circumspection which, in unprivileged cases, it is customary to regard. Such mistakes imply only the union of defective judgment with blunted sensibilities; but it could belong only to a vicious constitution of mind to mistake vulgarity for vigour, and blasphemy for wit; to introduce religion only for the purpose of insulting it; to scatter abroad the scandals of private history and the profligate gossip of the great; to make, in short, whatever is serious, or tender, or lovely in life, the perpetual theme of a flippant and heartless banter."

The foolishness of this remarkable diatribe is quite priceless, but Walpole's reputation may be left to take care of itself. The same critic, however, goes equally astray in his account of the facts of the situation. He tells us that "so awed was this libertine in sentiment by the dignity and purity of Mrs. More's character and demeanour that . . . the only banter with which he ever ventures to assail her was that of addressing her by the title of Saint, or Holy Hannah, the cheap raillery of vicious and vulgar men, but which shows the general impression made on the mind of this loose and light-minded person by the example of his correspondent, before whom his ribaldry was dumb and his ridicule confounded."

Horace was a gentleman, and though his later letters are full of the playful familiarity which intimacy warrants, he invariably treated Hannah with the consideration due to a lady. He had also a great respect as well as a great regard for her. "Miss Hannah More," he writes to Lady Ossory, on November 4, 1786, "is the best of our numerous Calliopes; and her heart is worth all Pindus." But he was not the least in awe of her; he roasted her mercilessly



for her little religious pruderies, and his letters to her are as frankly expressed as those to Lady Ossory or Lady Aylesbury. Alluding to some verses which she had published anonymously, he writes: "Since you are as modest as if your issue were illegitimate, I don't know but, like some females really in default, you would stifle some of your pretty infants, rather than be detected and blush."

Again, after touching on some forgotten scandal, he adds, "I could titter *à plusieurs reprises*; but I am too old to be improper, and you are too modest to be *impropered* to."

Having written a letter to her, which in the ordinary course would have been answered on the Sunday, he explains: "This is no plot to draw you into committing even a good deed on a Sunday, which I suppose the *liberality* of your conscience would haggle about, as if the day of the week constitutes the sin, and not the nature of the crime. But you may defer your answer till to-night has become to-morrow by the clock having struck one; and then you may do an innocent thing without guilt, which a quarter of an hour sooner you would think abominable."

In another letter he writes, "You are an errant reprobate, and grow wickeder and wickeder every day. You deserve to be treated like a *nègre*; and your favourite Sunday, to which you are so partial that you treat the other poor six days of the week as if they had no souls to be saved, should, if I could have any will, 'Shine no Sabbath day for you.' Now, don't simper, and look as if virtue would not melt in your mouth. Can you deny the following charges?" &c.

"I almost think," he wrote soon afterwards, "I shall never abuse you again. Nay, I would not, did it not prove so extremely good for you. No walnut-tree is better for being threshed than you are."

Walpole was probably right; and in any case Hannah thoroughly enjoyed her castigation. In September, 1789, she writes: "I comfort myself that you will counteract some part of the injury which you have done my principles this summer [by praising her verses] by a regular course of abuse when we meet in the winter; remember that you owe this restorative to my moral health; next to being flattered,

I like to be scolded; but, to be let quietly alone, would be intolerable." This is quite an audacious challenge—*Malo me Galatea petit*—but without doubt they were much attached to each other. On hearing that Walpole had injured his knee she wrote anxiously to inquire. "How you do scold me! but I don't care for your scolding, and I don't care for your wit neither, that I don't, half as much as I care for a blow which I hear you have given yourself against a table, though you are above mentioning it." She adds later: "I have not time to be half as pert as I intended, but I live ten miles from the post, and that you should think I neglected to obey you for *one* post would not sit so easy upon me."

Obviously she had no bad idea of flirting in a mild way, though both she and Horace were of an age to render this pastime fairly innocuous. She draws rather an interesting contrast between him and Sir William Pepys, the *Lælius* of *The Bas Bleu*. Lælius, it seems, was such a favourite with great and learned ladies, that in society he was usually button-holed by one of them. "Whereas Horace, liking nonsense talk better than to be always with the Greek [*sic*] and Romans, I sometimes get more than my share of him, as was the case at a most complete *bas bleu* the other night at Mrs. Vesey's, where was everything witty and everything learned that is to be had." On this occasion Hannah got into a corner between Horace and Soame Jenyns, "and was contented."

Except for his love of freedom, Charles Fox and all his works must have been *anathema maranatha* to Hannah; but she pays a naïve feminine tribute to his personal fascination. She was staying with Mrs. Garrick during the famous election of 1784, which shattered the Fox-North coalition. Fox was then canvassing Westminster with the active support of the Prince of Wales and the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire. Mrs. Garrick was a keen Pittite, and Hannah's political sympathies, so far as she had any, were those of her hostess. "But," she tells her sister, "unluckily for my principles, I met Fox canvassing the other day, and he looked so sensible and agreeable, that if I had not turned

my eyes another way, I believe it would have been all over with me."

Her feeling for Walpole, however, was no mere society friendship, but a deep and enduring affection. Much as she admired his wit, his varied knowledge, his literary abilities, and his polished manners, she prized still more his kindness, his patience, his humane sympathies, and the real goodness of his heart; and though she deplored his unorthodox views, she recognised truly enough that he was in no sense an atheist. She was probably the only woman who ever exercised any religious influence upon him, and to please her he actually read Law's *Serious Call*. Writing to him towards the close of his life, she ends her letter thus: "Adieu, my dear Lord, you have many wiser, wittier, and better friends, but you have not a more attached or more faithful one than yours—H. MORE." There can be no doubt that these words were sincere, and it is quite probable that they were also true.

Walpole must incidentally have proved a useful counterblast to John Newton, with whom Hannah became acquainted in 1787, and who subsequently exercised a powerful influence over her. This extraordinary man, after a stormy and dissolute youth, had drifted to the West Coast of Africa, whence, after some years of much hardship and suffering, he returned with the help of his father, and went into the slave trade. In 1755, at the age of thirty, he turned his thoughts to religious matters, was ordained in 1764, and became a prominent Evangelical divine. In his unregenerate days he seems to have been a perfect Boanerges of profanity, and was much impressed by his own proficiency in this accomplishment. Speaking of his voyage home, he says: "I know not that I have ever since met so daring a blasphemer. Not content with common oaths and imprecations, I daily invented new ones; so that I was often seriously reproved by the captain, who was himself a very passionate man, and not at all circumspect in his expressions."

The captain's reproofs may have been the unwilling tribute of professional jealousy; and in any case the memories of this time clung to Newton to the last. When over eighty he was urged by Cecil to discontinue preaching, but he ex-

claimed, "What! shall the old African blasphemer stop while he can speak?"

He had read deeply in many directions, and he possessed a robust if somewhat vulgar humour. Like many converts, his views were extreme. He was bitterly opposed to Roman Catholicism, he regarded all amusements as sinful, and all religion which did not torture the believer as worthless—a doctrine on a level with the superstition that medicine is useless unless it is nasty. He had deepened the gloom of the unhappy Cowper, with whom, as he said, he had for six years "walked pensively in the Valley of the Shadow of Death," and he produced a similar though less serious effect on Hannah, who was already predisposed to influences of this kind. After he comes into her life morbid self-tormentings gradually appear in her letters and journals. She begins to suspect evil in "innocent employments" because they "detain her thoughts from heaven."

In "innocent relaxations" she sees a snare. Later on even charitable and religious works are brought under the same ban. She tortures herself because she cannot keep her mind fixed on God and Eternity. "Oh, for more disentanglement from the world! more heavenly meditation." She laments that she would be constantly tempted to forget God were it not for "the frequent nervous headaches and low fevers" which somehow seem to remind her of His existence. Then comes a flash of more wholesome feeling. "I had rather *work* for God than meditate on Him"; and though she doubted the value of this inspiration, she practically carried it into splendid effect. Work of this kind was her real mission, as subsequent events abundantly showed. She had a certain bias towards that form of piety which sets faith before works, and religious observance before conduct. John Wesley perceived the danger which threatened her, and said to one of her sisters, "Tell her to live in the world; *there* is her sphere of usefulness." Fortunately, in any real emergency her better instincts prevailed; and, at the call of duty, she went forth bravely into the turmoil from which she would so gladly have fled. Had it been otherwise, she might have won the doubtful honours of an anchorite, but there would have been no Cheddar Mission.

It is pleasant to turn from Hannah the gloomy victim of religious despondency to the brighter Hannah who did not shrink from honest human happiness ; the Hannah who could talk, and laugh, and coquet, or slyly hide her face when Johnson blundered unwittingly into a broadness. In 1780 she paid a visit to Dr. Kennicott at Oxford, and here the fun was almost of a Bank Holiday type. Each of the party took an animal nickname. Dr. Kennicott was the Elephant, his wife was the Dromedary, her sister the Antelope, and Hannah herself the Rhinoceros. There is a short letter of hers to Mrs. Kennicott in the following terms : “ Dear *Dromy*,—Pray send word if *Ante* is come, and also how *Ele* does to your very affectionate *Rhiney*.” This is mild humour, no doubt, but it is eminently light-hearted. She also adds some critical “ Notes on the above epistle, by a commentator of the latter end of the Nineteenth Century,” which are quite amusing in a learned way. Here, too, is a brisk letter to Mrs. Kennicott in 1787 : “ If I were in the *Palace of Truth*, I should say, Dear Mrs. Kennicott ! how can you be so stupid as to mistake the meaning of my note, plain and perspicuous as it was ? For I value myself on the clearness of my sense, which it would have been impossible for you not to have understood if you had had common understanding. But, dating from Hampton, I am compelled to say, My dear Mrs. Kennicott, I am vastly sorry my stupidity should have given you so much trouble. I am sure I must have expressed myself very ambiguously : the fault I am most apt to commit. I often lament the want of perspicuity in my expressions : but if all my readers had your sagacity and penetration, it would less signify. Now which manner do you like best, obliging lies or offensive truth ? Lying for ever, I say ! It is agreeable to wicked nature, and soothing to self-love.”

It is plain, indeed, as she herself does not scruple to admit, that her natural taste was “ rather on the side of levity and gaiety ” ; and even from a serious point of view she thought that gaiety might be employed as “ an honest bait ” whereby people might be ultimately induced “ to relish religion.”

From 1774 to 1785 she spent her time mostly between

Bristol and London, or Hampton ; but in the latter year her gradually growing desire to withdraw to some extent from society was carried into effect. She built herself a house at Cowslip Green, in the parish of Wrington, near Bristol, where she spent most of her summers. About two years later, being then forty-two, she adopted the title of "Mrs." More. From this retreat she still keeps in touch with her friends of the gay world. She writes pleasant, chatty letters to Walpole, telling him about her new life : how "from morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve" she is "employed in raising dejected pinks, and reforming disorderly honeysuckles." He, to be sure, is feasting on "elopements, divorces, and suicides, tricked out in all the elegance of Mr. Topham's phraseology" ; but since letters and newspapers now "travel in coaches like gentlemen and ladies," they do not come within ten miles of her hermitage. So she has "to be contented with village vices, petty iniquities, and vulgar sins." And the place, too, is not without a modest fame of its own ; for in a little white house in the village John Locke was born. "He did not intend to have been born here, but his mother was on a visit when she produced this bright *idea*, and so bequeathed me something to boast of."

It was from Cowslip Green that she and Patty, in 1789, with the financial assistance of Wilberforce, commenced the great work of their lives, the Cheddar Mission. A description of this undertaking would be outside the scope of the present essay. It must suffice to say that they succeeded in reclaiming in hundreds the women and children of a district almost inhuman in its savagery, where some of the inhabitants lived in caves, and where no constable dared venture for fear of being murdered. However, in spite of all difficulties, schools and clubs were formed, and in two years the sisters were able to muster 517 school children for a great picnic on Callow Hill, one of the Mendip heights. It was a noble feast, consisting of "13 large pieces of beef, 45 great plum-puddings, 600 cakes, several loaves, and a great cask of cider."

In 1789 the other sisters gave up their school in Bristol,

and built a house in Great Pulteney Street, Bath. This served as winter quarters for them all, while they used Cowslip Green as a summer residence. Hannah meanwhile had steadily continued her literary work, and with remarkable success. It had been largely of a religious, or at least a serious character ; but in 1792, when the principles of the French Revolution and Tom Paine's doctrines began to disturb the country, she was strongly urged to write something to counteract them. After some hesitation she produced *Village Politics*, which she published under the pseudonym of "Will Chip." This, which was the work of a few hours only, took the form of a half humorous dialogue between Jack Anvil the blacksmith and Tom Hod the mason. It was a brilliant success, and is quite good reading even now. The mason is supposed to have been corrupted by Paine's *Rights of Man*, but is duly converted by his steadier neighbour. The following short extract may give an idea of the dialogue :—

TOM. I find that I am very unhappy and very miserable, which I should never have known if I had not the good luck to meet with this book. Oh, 'tis a precious book !

JACK. A good sign, though, that you can't find out what ails you without looking into a book for it. What is the matter ?

TOM. Matter ? Why, I want liberty.

JACK. Liberty ! That's bad indeed ! What, has any one fetched a warrant for thee ? Come, man, I'll be bound for thee. Thou art an honest fellow in the main, though thou dost tipple a little at the 'Rose and Crown.'

TOM. No, no ; I want a new constitution.

JACK. Indeed ! Why, I thought thou hast been a desperate healthy fellow. Send for the doctor.

(And so forth till Tom begins to get shaken in his new faith, and turns to his companion for information.)

TOM. And what dost thou take a democrat to be ?

JACK. One who likes to be governed by a thousand tyrants, and yet can't bear a king.

TOM. What is equality ?

JACK. For every one to put down every one who is above him.

TOM. What are the rights of Man ?

JACK. Battle, murder, and sudden death.

Encouraged by the success of *Village Politics*, she started in 1794 or 1795 a series of ballads and stories called *The Cheap Repository*, with the same object in view. These were written in a popular style, and are remarkable as coming from such a source. But they run rather heavily, being overweighted by their didactic top hamper, and indeed are mostly sermons in sheep's clothing. *The Cheap Repository* had an immense circulation, two million tracts being disposed of in the first year. But it was not a pecuniary success, and was abandoned in September, 1798, when Hannah resumed her serious writing once more.

In 1799 she became involved in a dispute with one Bere, the curate of Blagdon, in reference to the indiscreet zeal of one of her schoolmasters. Hannah seems to have been entirely blameless in the matter, which has been styled, rather magniloquently, "The Blagdon Controversy." The whole thing, however, was a storm in a teacup, and of no real public interest whatever. But the extraordinarily bitter feeling which it evoked is a useful illustration of the violent antagonism which Hannah's schemes seemed generally to have aroused. The local opposition which the Cheddar Mission at first encountered was intelligible. The farmer who told Hannah that "the lower class were fated to be wicked and ignorant," frankly believed that religion simply made the poor lazy and useless; and, as an employer of labour, was pardonably alarmed at the prospect of his ploughmen being turned from workmen into "saints." But it is not so easy to understand why the scheme should have met with so much hostility from the world at large. Methodists and Churchmen, "the secretaries" and "the High Church bigots," the followers of Tom Paine and the *Anti Jacobin* magazine, are all ranged against her. The malignity of this hostility blazes out in the charges (often mutually destructive) which from time to time were made against her. It was asserted that she had actually been arrested for seditious practices. Another report said that she had an actor for a lover (the poor lady was over sixty at the time). She was accused of hiring two men to assassinate



a clergyman who had attacked some of her charity schools, and of having conspired with Hadfield in his attempt on the King's life. On the other hand she was said to be in the pay of Pitt, and to be "the grand instigator of the war by mischievous pamphlets"; and finally that she had been concerned with Charlotte Corday in the murder of Marat. She once narrowly escaped being burnt to death, but was saved by the material of her dress, which was technically known as "lasting stuff." Out came this spiteful epigram in a Bristol paper:—

Vulcan to scorch thy gown in vain essays,  
 Apollo strives in vain to fire thy lays;  
 Hannah! the cause is visible enough,  
 Stuff is thy raiment, and thy writings—stuff.

The following retort was published by a friend:—

Cloth'd in his filth, lo! Epigram appears,  
 His face distorted by a thousand sneers;  
 Why this attack is visible enough,  
 The scribbler envies Hannah's lasting stuff.

This animosity can be partly, but only partly, explained. The Methodists disliked her because she attracted people from their meetings to the services of the Church. The common people distrusted her because they confounded her teachings with Methodism, of which many of them had a superstitious dread.\* A countryman declared that one

\* Her attitude towards Methodism is rather severely criticised by the author of *The Life and Times of Selina, Lady Huntingdon*. He writes: "She dreaded the name of Methodist, and from this part of the reproach of the cross she turned away. . . . She was flattered by the attention paid her by persons of rank in Church and State, and she was unwilling to endanger it by any, the least, connexion with those whom it was the fashion to brand as sectaries, enthusiasts, and fanatics. This was her fault, and it brought its own punishment with it. She has been indelibly stamped a *Methodist*, and all the waters of the Atlantic will not wash her clean from the 'foul blot.' How often has she struggled to throw off the vile imputation! This is the weakness of her character. . . . Higher ground ought to have been taken by such a character as Hannah More; and posterity would not have blamed her had she shown that, much as she loved the Church, she loved souls better" (i. 293).

of his apple-trees, under which a Methodist had once preached, never bore fruit again. Churchmen were opposed to her because, though she protested her orthodoxy and devotion to the Church, they suspected her, not without reason, of leanings towards Calvinism. Her zeal for the abolition of slavery made her unpopular with one class, and her dislike of Catholic emancipation with another. Moreover, her association with Wilberforce, whose opposition to the war with France caused him to be regarded as a Little Englander, may have helped to swell the popular disfavour towards her. But beside these causes there must have been something in her personality to kindle the bitter dislike which she aroused in many quarters; and it is difficult to resist a suspicion that her zeal was rather aggressive at times. This can certainly be said of her sister Patty, who was her fellow-worker in Cheddar. Patty was a lady of strong opinions, who had no hesitation whatever in expressing them; and it is clear from her *Mendip Annals* that she was often bigoted and high-handed in her dealings with the flock.

In 1801 Hannah left Cowslip Green and built herself a larger house at Barleywood, about half a mile out of Wrington; and shortly afterwards her sisters parted with their house in Bath and joined her.

We hear of Barleywood also as the playground of another literary genius, the future Lord Macaulay. Zachary Macaulay had married a Miss Mills, who had been a pupil, and afterwards an assistant, in the Bristol school. Hannah, having called one day at the Macaulays' house, was met by a small fair-haired boy, who politely informed her that his parents were out, but begged her to come in and have a glass of old spirits. When asked why he gave this startling invitation the child explained that he had taken the idea from *Robinson Crusoe*. Hannah was much amused by the incident, and made a great pet of the boy. He would stay for weeks at a time at Barleywood, where the kind old ladies took the greatest care of him, mentally and physically, joining in his studies and seeing that he got plenty of air and exercise. Macaulay, speaking of these

visits, says: "In parlour and kitchen they could not make enough of me. They taught me to cook, and I was to preach, and they got in people from the fields, and I stood on a chair and preached sermons. I might have been indicted for holding a conventicle."

The Barleywood establishment continued unbroken till the death of Mary in 1813. Elizabeth died in 1816, Sarah in 1817, and Martha in 1819. Hannah continued to live on at Barleywood, but her health gave way seriously, and she had dangerous illnesses in 1820, 1822, and 1824. In 1828 she discovered that her servants had taken advantage of her feebleness to indulge in all sorts of peculation and disorder; and accordingly she broke up her establishment for the last time, and retired to 4, Windsor Terrace, Clifton, where she died peacefully on September 7, 1833. Even to the last she retained some of her old light-heartedness. When she was eighty-one she wrote the following mock-heroic poem on seeing a dead pig being dragged up the hill to her house:—

The saddest sight that e'er was seen,  
Was piggy rolling up the green!  
Though dragged, he still would roll alone  
Downward, like Sisyphus's stone.  
This pig, as good as e'er was sold,  
Was worth—not quite his weight in gold.  
That pork's unwholesome, doctors tell us,  
Though of the fact I'm somewhat jealous.  
And I believe, beyond all question,  
Bacon is sovereign for digestion;  
For this one cause, among a few,  
I'm glad I was not born a Jew.  
No quadruped like piggy claims  
To give his flesh such various names.  
The calf and sheep half starve the glutton,  
By yielding only veal and mutton;  
While all extol the liberal swine,  
For griskin, and the savoury chine;  
How often does the brawny fitch  
*Adorn* the table and *enrich*!  
The stately ham, the rasher small,  
Are liked in every state and all.  
Who will confess they see no good in  
The poignant sausage or blackpudding?  
The sparerib, sweetbone, ears and snout,

My bill of fare will quite make out ;  
 For I disdain my song to close  
 By stooping to the pettitoes.  
 He ne'er was seen to dance a jig,  
 Though a genteel and graceful pig ;  
 Yet when he round my field would prance,  
 It might be called a *country dance*.  
 Those *men* who dancing lives have led,  
 Are worse than nothing when they're dead.  
 While piggy's goodness ne'er appears  
 Till closed his eyes and deaf his ears.  
 Though feeding spoilt his shape and beauty,  
 Yet feeding was in him a duty :  
 In spite of this reproach or that  
 'Twas his sole duty to grow fat.  
 Death was to him no awful sentence,  
 No need for sorrow or repentance :  
 How many a *Government* stout and big,  
 Might envy thy last hour, O pig !

Sus,

*From my Styte, Barley Wood.*

Two years later, in recognition of the kind attentions which she received from her many friends, she playfully drew up "A Sketch of my Court at Windsor Terrace, 1828." In this, among other names, the Duke of Gloucester, Sir Thomas Acland and Mr. Harford appear as her "sportsmen"; Mr. Battersby, Mr. Pigott, and Mrs. Addington as her "fruiterers"; Mr. Walker Gray, her "confectioner"; Mr. Edward Brice, her "fishmonger"; "Miss Roberts's my counsellors, *not* solicitors, for they give more than they take"; and finally, "Mr. Cadell [her publisher] accoucheur to the Muses, who has introduced many a sad, sickly brat to see the light; but whispers that they must not depend on a long life." In one of her last letters, written in her eighty-eighth year, she congratulates a friend on his new book, in which she is "enchanted to find powerful reasoning and profound reflections so frequently diversified by the brilliant, the sprightly, and the gay."

The serious side of her character came so prominently forward in her later life as to obscure to a great extent its lighter side. But her contemporaries were fully aware of

it. Sir William Pepys, writing to her in 1817, says: "I wonder whether your grave and serious pursuits have entirely destroyed in you your relish for pleasantries, though a little foolish, which you once possessed." To which she replies: "I really can say that age, as far as I can judge, has in no degree subdued the natural gaiety of my temper, and I hope it is no infringement on better things, that my taste for humour, and a sort of sensible nonsense, is no whit diminished. I am thankful that a life of ill-health has no ways impaired my constitutional cheerfulness, and I am sometimes afraid that I take more than my share in society." She was then seventy-two. But Sir William must have known that this "relish" was not extinguished when he told her the story of the father asking his daughter why she did not wear her ring. "Because, papa, it hurts me when any one squeezes my hand," was the reply. "What business have you to have your hand squeezed?" "Certainly not, but still, you know, papa, one would like to keep it in *squeezable* order."

To understand her aright it is necessary to remember that there were two distinct strains in her character; on the one hand, the bright intellect, warm heart, and blithe spirits which drew her towards a world of wit, learning, and literature; and on the other, the stern Puritanism which bade her shun this world and all its works as deadly to the welfare of the soul. These two strains, though often intertwined, were never interfused, and her whole life was the arena of a struggle between them. In the end the mastery of the graver side was complete; but the other, though subdued, was not extinguished, and undoubtedly helped to brighten the gloom which sometimes threatened to overwhelm her. One of the results of this conflict was the feverish piety into which she was often plunged. The conquering Puritanism knew no mercy in its hour of victory, and would drive her into fits of abject self-torture and remorse. Under the obsession of these moods her religion became almost as nauseous as John Newton's. Moreover, as often happens, the inevitable reaction brought with it a certain complacent self-righteousness.

In a letter to one of her sisters she says: "I have just been requested to promote a subscription for poor Maty's widow, who is left in great distress; but what little I do I had rather do from my own purse, than by applications. I must not remember that he disliked me, and did me whatever little ill turn he could in his *Review*." So, too, in reference to her will, she notes in her journal that she "made it a point to leave a legacy to the Bath Hospital, as a mark of forgiveness to those governors who received from Spenser the wages of iniquity, with a view to inflict public disgrace on me. Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

There is an unpleasant ring about these passages. But though the taint was there, it never got very deep; and, on the whole, she seems to have been unusually free from this *sequela* of religious debauchery.

Her didactic zeal often shows a certain lack of discrimination. She is so eager to drive home her moral, that she is not too particular in the selection of her arguments. Every conceivable plea is pressed into her service, with the result that the case is often overstated, while the arguments at times display a curious incongruity. Thus, after deploring (in *Cælebs*) the indelicacy of the female dress of the age, she adds, as an inducement to reform: "Oh! if women in general knew what was their real interest, if they could guess with what a charm even the *appearance* of modesty invests its possessor, they would dress decorously from mere self-love, if not from principle. The designing would assume modesty as an artifice; the coquet would adopt it as an allurements; the pure as her appropriate attraction; and the voluptuous as the most infallible art of seduction." Clearly this argument proves too much; and, as Sydney Smith pertinently observes, "If there is any truth in this passage, nudity becomes a virtue, and no decent woman for the future can be seen in garments."

She was warm and devoted in her friendships, though it must be confessed that she was rather inclined to gush over her friends. But anything which savoured of disloyalty her soul abhorred. She writes a pretty apology to Horace Walpole for unwittingly "betraying" one of

his letters to the Bishop of London, and playfully fears that she will "become an adage of deceit, and if the next generation should ever hear of me at all, it will be because the present will have converted me into a proverbial phrase; and to say 'as faithless as Hannah More' will sum up every idea of female fraud and duplicity."

She had little sympathy with French thought or habits; but when she heard some of the English grandees expressing their dislike of the French nobles and bishops who had fled to England from the Revolution, she retorted, "You should have found out their vices before they wanted a dinner; they had no sins when they were able to give you magnificent fêtes in their own country."

Her outlook was often narrowed by her religious prejudices, but these did not stifle her vigorous common sense. They did not blind her, for instance, to the fact that "vulgar people will be vulgar in their religion," or that "the failings of the Fathers" were "a plentiful crop." When the religious movement in Cheddar threatened to develop some of the usual excesses of revivalism, she put her foot down promptly, and refused to publish an edict against "the sin of wearing flowers," or to countenance any morbid objections to matrimony. She was fully alive to the danger of over-educating the poor, and, indeed, did not even allow writing to be taught in her Cheddar schools.

Thirty years later, as she reminds Wilberforce, the tide of public opinion was running violently in the opposite direction, and all the poor were to be turned into scholars and philosophers. Naturally enough they were unable to assimilate their new intellectual diet, and Hannah tells how a little girl in a neighbouring parish, on being asked what she learnt, answered, "I learns gography and the harts and senses."

Though by no means a great poet, she had a real poetical sense, and her defence of *Lycidas* (fancy *Lycidas* requiring an apologist!) against Johnson shows that she was ready to do battle for it if necessary. But she had some severe limitations, which were partly due to the

practical bent of her character. Science had no attractions for her. She held that the proper study of mankind is Man, and, in *The Bas Bleu*, is impatiently scornful of the students of nature. Romances "have the deadly sin of not interesting" her, and she turns with relief from Dryden to the human passions of Shakespeare and the common sense of Pope. She does not care for music; and though she was delighted with Walpole's invitation to Strawberry Hill, she was bored by the "virtu and antiquarianism" of the place. She has "no great appetite," she tells her sister in reference to some letters of Henry IV., for "anything merely as being curious unless it has other merits." Even Oxford with its historic associations, its architecture, its old-world interest, seems to have had no message for her. In a letter to Mr. and Mrs. Huber written in 1820, she says: "I am a passionate admirer of whatever is beautiful in nature or exquisite in art." If this be so, she certainly dissembled her love most successfully throughout her life. But probably the remark may be taken as merely rhetorical; for she nowhere displays any genuine interest in art, and she did not really admire nature outside her own garden. Broadly speaking, her two absorbing interests were religion and intellect, and though with her as with many others they were not always comfortable yoke-fellows, she was thoroughly in earnest about each of them. Indeed, it is the rivalry between the two which makes her life such a picturesque patchwork; and we may feel that Walpole was not far wrong when he wrote to her in tender appreciation: "Adieu, thou who mightest be one of the cleverest of women if thou didst not prefer to be one of the best! And when I say *one* of the best, I have not engaged my vote for the second."



## X. THE MACARONIS

TIME, which so easily dims the remembrance even of the great facts of history, speedily smothered its minor incidents in oblivion, and the fame of the Macaronis has bowed to the inexorable law. The jingle which tells of Yankee Doodle's journey to town, if it still lingers in our nurseries, is almost the only record of them which survives; their very name retains so little of its old significance that I have known an allusion to them to be mistaken for a colloquial reference to Italian Rentes. But a century and a half ago they were on the top of the tide. Everything fashionable was "*à la Macaroni*." There were the Turf Macaronis, the Parade Macaronis, Macaroni Dancing Masters, and, somewhat strangely, Macaroni Scholars and Grub Street Macaronis. Even the pulpit was invaded by their influence, and the clergy had their wigs combed, their hair cut, and their delivery refined *à la Macaroni*. The epilogue to a play entitled *The Macaroni*, which appeared in 1773, contains these lines:—

The world's so Macarony'd grown of late,  
That common mortals now are out of date;  
No single class of men their merit claim,  
Or high, or low, in faith 'tis all the same.

The interest, however, which these Macaronis excited was not all admiration, and the press of the day indulged in the most venomous attacks upon them.

Nor fish, nor flesh, a creature dull and droney,  
Of doubtful sex, and called a Macaroni.

This is Temple Luttrell's description. In an *Apos-*

*trophe to Fashion*, appearing in the *Universal Magazine* of June, 1772, the writer exclaims:—

“Man is thine, and woman too: the world is thine. . . . Nor least, though last, that taper, trim, two-legged Bagatelle—that soft-fac’d, soft-hearted thing, with a great head and nothing in it, thy well-beloved Macaroni. For thee he dances, dresses, ogles, limps; for thee he straddles upon tiptoe, lisps like a sempstress, skips upon carpets, and ambles round Ladies’ knees; for thee he quits his manhood, and is that amphibious, despicable thing that we see him.”

The October number of the same year contains an article entitled *A New Description of a Macaroni*. The description is not remarkable for its novelty, as it merely reiterates the current abuse: but if it lacks originality it is not wanting in bitterness.

“I am going to speak,” says the writer, “of that wretched thing called a Macaroni. To the Naturalists I leave it to determine whether it is masculine, feminine, or neuter—whether it belongs to the species of beasts, or—whether it is of the reptile kind. For my own part it is sufficient to me to know that it is a creature; but I am also of opinion that it is neither a Christian, nor an ass, nor a four-footed beast, nor a woman.” The Macaroni dress, according to him, is calculated to make the handsome ugly, and the ugly ridiculous. “Were you to see a group of them together, you would swear that the sepulchres had disgorged their nauseous contents—such a stench! and such figures!—lean, disjointed carcasses, with thrill and dying voices! And no wonder: they are in general the wretched offspring of feeble and debilitated parents.” After some physiological speculations as to the Macaroni’s origin which can hardly be reproduced, the writer attacks the Macaroni’s dress, and then proceeds to deal with his manners, which “are still more strange than his dress. He is the sworn foe of all learning, and even sets simple orthography at defiance; for all learned fellows who can spell and write sense, are either queer dogs, or poor rogues, both which

he hates mortally. They are even with him." He is also a mass of affectation. "If you see him at the theatre, he will scarcely wink without his opera glass, which he will thrust into a lady's face, and then simper and be 'pruddigissly entertenned' with her confusion. He laughs at religion, because it is too rational a pleasure for him to conceive: he hates it therefore as much as he hates fighting. . . . He hates all drinking—except tea, capillaire, and posset; and detests those rude nasty fellows, who drink the generous grape, or swallow punch, or the fumes of tobacco. In short he loves nobody but himself; and by nobody, except himself, is he beloved."

Though the animus which breathes through this otherwise feeble tirade detracts from its value as testimony, it probably represents fairly well the middle-class opinion of the day, which regarded the Macaroni as an unmanly and fantastic eccentricity, deficient alike in physical and mental vigour. In 1773, when Johnson was being urged to make his tour in the Hebrides, the amount of riding which it threatened to involve seemed to him an insuperable objection. "If we must ride much we shall not go, and there's an end on't." Whereupon Boswell began to chaff him on his fears. "You are a delicate Londoner: you are a Macaroni; you can't ride." Johnson, indignant at this charge, retorted, "Sir, I shall ride better than you. I was only afraid that I should not find a horse able to carry me."

But however despicable the later development of the Macaronis may have been, the original Macaroni was of a very different type. To appreciate this we must go back a few years. Most of the coffee and chocolate houses—some two thousand in number—which flourished in London in the early part of the eighteenth century, had become, before the middle of the century, resorts for gambling. Many of them had a sort of recognised clientele, professional or otherwise; Will's in Covent Garden was the resort of the poets, the St. James's Coffee House of the politicians. The Young Man's Coffee

House was favoured by military men. Lawyers collected at Nando's or The Grecian, clergymen at Child's, and merchants at Garraway's or Jonathan's. But their entrance charge being cheap, usually a penny, bad characters of all kinds could easily gain admittance. White's Chocolate House in St. James's Street was at this time the recognised meeting-place for the aristocracy and men of fashion, and aimed at a certain exclusiveness. Its entrance charge was sixpence, and, by an unwritten law, tobacco was only permitted within its precincts in the form of snuff. If any ignorant visitor called for a pipe, he was soon made aware of his mistake by the sneers of the company and the scorn of the very waiters. But neither its higher charge nor the superior refinement of its society availed to exclude the undesirable characters who were attracted by its high play. Accordingly, after a time, the *élite* of its frequenters formed themselves into a private club, which met at the Chocolate House, but in some rooms set apart for them, to which the public was not admitted. This was the earliest beginning of the club movement, which soon developed so rapidly: for after a time the public was excluded from the premises altogether, and White's Chocolate House became White's Club. The exact date of this transformation is uncertain, but it was at some time previous to 1736. All the leading men of the day joined it, and so great was the competition for membership, that about 1740 a "Young White's" was formed to relieve the pressure. By this time the high play at White's had become notorious. Mrs. Delany in her correspondence speaks of it as "a pit of destruction." "Young White's" was a chip of the old block in this respect; and about 1760 the gambling at the two clubs was tremendous. Soon after this, however, apparently under some indirect pressure from George III., the high play at both clubs came to an end. The gambling of their members, however, by no means succumbed to this reform; it merely shifted its quarters. For, in 1764, a Scotchman named Macall formed a club, under the

patronage of twenty-seven leading men of fashion, to supply the want.\*

This club, which he called "Almack's"—a sort of inversion of his own name—had premises at 5, Pall Mall, and was speedily thronged with the gamblers of society. Richard Rigby writes to George Selwyn, March 12, 1765: "The old club flourishes very much, and the young one has been better attended than of late years, but the deep play is removed to Almack's, where you will certainly follow it."

Almack's, however, was not entirely consecrated to gamblers, and it attracted some men of a very different stamp. Gibbon, Hume, and Garrick were among its members. Gibbon says of it that "the style of living, though *somewhat* expensive, is exceedingly pleasant, and, notwithstanding the rage of play, I have found more entertainment and rational society here than in any other club to which I belong" (Prothero, i. 284). This testimony to the intellectual attractions of Almack's is valuable as coming from Gibbon, who combined with literature and learning rather a pretty taste in fashionable clubs. He belonged to the Cocoa Tree, the Romans, and Boodles, as well as to Almack's, and in his younger days had himself sown an unpretentious little crop of wild oats. He was consequently able to balance its virtues and its vices from the commanding position of a man who has tried both. But, indeed, it is clear from other sources that, notwithstanding its high play, Almack's was not merely a gang of gamblers. It was an assemblage which presented some startling and piquant contrasts. Wealth, rank, and fashion no doubt led the revel, with all the vices and foibles of the day in their train; but intellect and culture were also represented there, and not only

\* The following is a list of the original twenty-seven members of Almack's: The Duke of Roxburghe, the Earl of Strathmore, Lord Montagu, Mr. Robinson, Mr. J. Crewe, Mr. Boothby, Mr. Stewart Shawe, Mr. Crauford, Mr. Penton, the Marquis of Tavistock, Mr. Milles, Mr. Smith, Lord Torrington, the Duke of Portland, Mr. Mytton, Sir G. Macartney, Mr. James, Mr. Fox (not Charles, who was elected in 1765: probably his brother Stephen), Mr. Codrington, Mr. Southwell, Mr. Wynne, Mr. Lockhart, the Duke of Gordon, Lord William Gordon, Mr. Pennant, Mr. Crowle, Mr. Bouverie.

represented but honoured. And in the midst of it all there arose a sort of inner society in which these various elements were combined. The members of this circle, being mostly young, indulged without restraint in every fashionable extravagance and foppery which caught their fancy. They lived to the full the life which they found around them, but their ideas were not limited to mere dissipation. Foreign travel was imposed as one of the conditions of membership ; many of them were active politicians, and many were also distinguished by literary tastes and attainments. These were the original Macaronis of 1764 ; and so prominently did they come to the front, that Almack's soon became practically identified with them, and got to be known as the Macaroni Club. Walpole, writing on February 6, 1764, alludes to Almack's as " the Macaroni Club (which is composed of all the travelled young men who wear long curls and spying-glasses)". So popular did Almack's become that it threatened to drain White's of its members. Walpole writes to George Montagu, December 16, 1764 : " Then for the morning you have levees and drawing-rooms without end. Not to mention the Maccaroni Club, which has quite absorbed Arthur's ; for you know old fools will hobble after young ones." White's is often spoken of about this time as " Arthur's " ; one Arthur having acquired a lease of the premises in 1730. The Young Club seems to have suffered in like manner a year later. Miss Mary Townshend, writing to her uncle, George Selwyn, on February 8, 1765, says : " The Macaronis have demolished young White's by admitting almost the whole club, and are themselves in danger of being deserted in their turn by their members being chosen into the Old Club."

It will be seen, therefore, that the original Macaronis, whose name was due to their actual or supposed introduction of the dish into England,\* differed *toto cælo* from

\* This is the explanation usually given, but I am inclined to think that the nickname may have been imported from Italy half a century earlier. Addison, in the *Spectator* (April 24, 1711), speaks of " those contemporaneous wits whom every nation calls by the name of that dish of meat which it loves best. In Holland they are termed *Pickled Herrings* ; in France, *Jean Pottages* ; in Italy, *Maccaronies*."

those depicted in the *Universal Magazine*. They were drawn from an altogether different class, and had different aims and ideals. Indeed, to take a single brilliant instance, their leading spirit was no "soft-fac'd, soft-hearted thing," no physical or mental weakling, no effeminate loungeur or coward, but Charles James Fox.

But hark, the voice of battle shouts from far,  
 The Jews and Maccaronis are at war :  
 The Jews prevail, and thund'ring from the stocks,  
 They seize, they bind, they circumcise CHARLES FOX.  
*Mason : Heroic Epistle.*

The Jews had undoubtedly a grievance against him, for his liabilities to them were enormous, and his indifference to obligations of this kind was one of the worst features of his character. His outer room was so haunted by creditors of this nationality, that he used to call it "the Jerusalem Chamber." He would borrow at last even from the club waiters and the chairmen in St. James's Street, and his personal friends were severely victimised in the same manner. It is impossible here to do more than touch on the social career of this remarkable man. Born on January 24, 1749, he was introduced to the gaming table at the age of fourteen and while still at Eton. This occurred, incredible as it may sound, under the direct encouragement of his father, Lord Holland, who took him, in May, 1763, to the tables of Spa and other places on the Continent. After four months, however, of this dissipation, he went back at his own desire to Eton, and shortly afterwards received a practical reminder of his return *in statum pupillarem* in the shape of a sound flogging from Dr. Barnard. In 1765 he was elected at Almack's. In 1767 he again visited the Continent, and incurred debts, it was said, to the amount of £16,000 in Naples alone. He was returned for Midhurst in 1768, before he was twenty years old, and rapidly rose to political prominence. With his politics we are not here concerned, but he was equally conspicuous in social life. He became one of the leaders of the fashionable world, "the meteor of these days," as Walpole calls him ; "the hero in

Parliament, at the gaming table, and at Newmarket." In later years, he seems to have headed a crusade against dress. Wraxall treats the subject with a solemnity that is almost pathetic. Speaking of the period between 1777 and 1792, he says: "Mr. Fox and his friends, who might be said to dictate to the Town, affecting a style of neglect about their persons, and manifesting a contempt of all the usages hitherto established, first threw a sort of discredit on dress. From the House of Commons, and the clubs in St. James's Street, the Contagion spread through the private Assemblies of London" (*Memoirs*, i. 142).

This affectation of simplicity in dress, which was partly intended by Fox to be an advertisement of his Republican sympathies, he seems to have pushed to the length of personal uncleanness. We hear of informal gatherings at his rooms, when he rose (late enough) in the morning, at which he would address his followers, with his bristly black person, rarely "purified by any ablutions, wrapped in a foul linen night-gown." Selwyn, too, writing in 1781, says, evidently as a matter for surprise: "I saw Charles to-day in a new hat, frock, waistcoat, shirt, and stockings; he was as clean and smug as a gentleman." But in his Macaroni days he shared with Lord Carlisle (Frederick, fifth Earl) the reputation of being the best dressed man in London.

He's exceedingly curious in coats and in frocks,  
So the tailor's a pigeon to this Mr. Fox.

He seems indeed to have been responsible for one of the most striking peculiarities of the Macaroni costume. *The Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine* for January, 1773, contains a sort of appreciation of him, under the title of "*The Senatorial Macaroni*." In this we are told that "To him the Macaroni world are indebted for many improvements in the articles of dress, particularly to the renovation of that fashion laid aside since the beginning of the present century—red-heeled shoes: C——s, appearing in these on a Birth-night about three years ago, brought them into fashion."



As a scholar, an orator, and a linguist he stood in the front rank; and to his "amazing abilities," as Walpole calls them, he added an exceptional power of concentration, having "a propensity to labour at excellence even in his amusements." Carlisle says of him (July 12, 1772): "I believe there never was a person yet created who had the faculty of reasoning like him. His judgments are never wrong; his decision is formed quicker than any man's I ever conversed with; and he never seems to mistake but in his own affairs." He adds later: "I sometimes am determined never to think about Charles's affairs, or his conduct about them: for they are like religion, the more one thinks, the more one is puzzled."

He was indeed a puzzle to all his friends. George Selwyn writes of him: "Son caractère, son genie, et sa conduite sont également extraordinaires et m'est incompréhensibles." Having regard to his unpardonable neglect of his pecuniary obligations, it may seem sufficiently incomprehensible that, in 1781, when this was written, he should have had any friends left to puzzle. Most of them had paid toll to his necessities, and Carlisle was for some time seriously hampered by them. Lord Holland, who died July 1, 1774, left £154,000 for the payment of his debts, but even this huge sum proved only a temporary assistance. His bad luck, made conspicuous by the magnitude of his losses, was proverbial.

At Almack's of pigeons I'm told there are flocks,  
But it's thought the completest is one Mr. Fox.  
If he touches a card, if he rattles a box,  
Away fly the guineas of this Mr. Fox.

This persistently adverse fortune seems to have given rise to a suspicion of foul play: and in 1823 Lord Egremont told Lord John Russell that he was convinced that there had been a confederacy among the gamblers of Fox's youth, whereby he had been actually duped and cheated (*Memorials and Letters of Fox*, i. 91). But however this may be, Fox's own reputation undoubtedly suffered from his disregard of his creditors. Walpole writes on

July 13, 1773, to Sir Horace Mann: "The Maccaronis are at their *ne plus ultra*: Charles Fox is already so like Julius Cæsar, that he owes a hundred thousand pounds. Lord Carlisle pays fifteen hundred, and Mr. Crewe twelve hundred a year for him—literally for him, being bound for him, while he, as like Brutus as Cæsar, is indifferent about such paltry matters." And again, in a letter to Lord Nuneham of December 6, 1773: "Lord Holland has given Charles Fox a draught of an hundred thousand pounds, and it pays all his debts but a trifle of thirty thousand pounds, and those of Lord Carlisle, Crewe, and Foley, who being only friends, not Jews, may wait." Selwyn grows very indignant at Fox's treatment of Carlisle, and even Carlisle's forbearance breaks down when he finds that his claims are about to be ignored in the settlement of Fox's liabilities. But, for all this, Fox was a universal favourite in society. The intemperance and invective which he imported into politics, to the disgust even of his own followers, never entered into his private life, where the charm of his manner was irresistible. Being a great-great-grandson of Charles II., it is possible that his sunny disposition may have come to him from his royal ancestor, as well as the *damnosa hæreditas* of his recklessness and profligacy. Madame du Deffand, writing to Horace Walpole on January 13, 1777, observed of him: "Il n'a pas un mauvais cœur, mais il n'a nul espèce de principes, et il regarde avec pitié tous ceux qui en ont. . . . Je lui aurai paru une platte moraliste [fancy Madame du Deffand crowned with this reproach] et lui il m'a paru un sublime extravagant." The description, if somewhat severe, was substantially true. Women, play, and politics, were, as his friend Boothby declared, the three passions of his life, and with regard to them all he was "un sublime extravagant." But, as his critic admitted, he had no bad heart. He "rated friendship very highly among the goods of life," and, in his perverse way, was devoted to his friends. Serenely indifferent to his own mishaps, he was easily affected by those of others, and he could hardly listen unmoved to any tale of woe—except from a creditor. His iron constitution carried him untouched through trials of

endurance under which ordinary men would have broken down. Gibbon, writing to Lord Sheffield (February 8, 1772) in reference to the debate on a Bill for relieving clergymen from the necessity of subscribing to the Thirty-nine Articles, observes: "By the by, C. F. [Charles Fox] prepared himself for that holy war by passing twenty-two hours in the pious exercise of Hazard; his devotions cost him only about five hundred pounds an hour—in all, eleven thousand pounds."

But his dissipations did not quench some wholesome outdoor tastes, though his bulk must have interfered a good deal with his pursuit of them. He was a cricketer, though he describes himself as an indifferent player, and he used to hunt, in spite of his difficulty in getting properly mounted.

He delights much in hunting, though fat as an ox;  
I pity the horses of this Mr. Fox.  
They are probably most of them lame in the hocks,  
Such a heavy-made fellow is this Mr. Fox.

The last years of his turbulent life were probably his happiest. In 1795 he married a beautiful Mrs. Armitstead, who had been for many years his mistress, and lived with her in perfect happiness till his death in 1806. On his fiftieth birthday (January 24 1799), he presented her with the following verses:—

Of years I have now half a century past,  
And none of the fifty so blest as the last.  
How it happens my troubles thus daily should cease,  
And my happiness thus with my years should increase,  
This defiance of Nature's more general laws  
You alone can explain, who alone are the cause.

Almost to the last his constitution retained its powers. Creevey writes on May 11, 1803: "I supped last night with Fox at Mrs. Bouverie's. . . . There were there Grey, Whitbread, Lord Lauderdale, Fitzpatrick, Lord Robert Spencer, Lord John Townshend and your humble servant. . . . You would be perfectly astonished at the vigour of body, the energy of mind, the innocent playfulness and happiness

of Fox. The contrast between him and his old associates is the most marvellous thing I ever saw—they having all the air of shattered debauchees, of passing gaming, drinking, sleepless nights, whereas the old leader of the gang might really pass for the pattern and the effect of domestic good order ” (Creevey, i. 13).

I have dwelt at some length on Fox’s characteristics in order to point the contrast between the earlier and later Macaronis. None of the former present so striking a figure as Fox, but they were mostly fashioned on the same lines. Like him, they were gamblers almost to a man. “The gaming at Almack’s,” writes Walpole on February 2, 1770, “which has taken the *pas* of White’s, is worthy the decline of our Empire, or Commonwealth, which you please. The young men of the age lose five, ten, fifteen thousand pounds in an evening there. Lord Stavordale, not one-and-twenty, lost eleven thousand there, last Tuesday, but recovered it by one great hand at hazard: he swore a great oath—‘Now, if I had been playing *deep*, I might have won millions.’ His cousin, Charles Fox, shines equally there and in the House of Commons. He was twenty-one yesterday se’nnight; and is already one of our best speakers. Yesterday he was made a Lord of the Admiralty.”

In this respect, however, they only conformed to a fashion, which though they helped to lead, had already been set them by an earlier generation, and was rapidly penetrating every rank of society. Bets were made, as the records of White’s Club show, on every conceivable subject. Hundreds were staked on such absurdities as a race of maggots across a plate; and from the prints and caricatures of the period it seemed that the same passion had descended to the *gamins* of the gutter. Walpole writes to Mann, March 11, 1770, telling him of a parson who, having somehow wandered into White’s on the morning of the first earthquake in 1750, heard bets made as to whether the sound was that of an earthquake or of a powder mill exploding. “He went away,” says Walpole, “exceedingly scandalised, and exclaiming, ‘I protest they are such an impious set of people, that I believe if the last trumpet was

to sound, they would bet puppet show against Judgment.' ” Walpole, writing to Mann on July 10, 1774, records with indignation an atrocious bet made by a Mr. Blake, that a man could live for twelve hours under water. This was actually put to the test, “a desperate fellow” being hired, and sunk in a ship—of course with a fatal result. Even the respectable middle-class were infected with the passion for play. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* of March, 1767 there appears an imaginary “*Journal of a Day, being a specimen of the life of a tradesman's daughter.*” After getting up at eleven, the young lady puts off her music master, and gets dressed by three, “to dine with my papa and mama.” Thence, after a rest, she went to the play at half-past six: “and from thence set off to Mrs. Draper's rout; lost about five guineas at quadrille; and I believe it might be three at whist.”

The Almack gamblers had some magnificent ideas on the subject of play. The following entry appears in the Book of Members: “Mr. Thynne having won *only* twelve thousand guineas during the last two months retired in disgust, March 21, 1772.” He seems, however, to have tempered his dreams of avarice with a business-like prudence most uncommon in a gambler, as we learn from Mrs. Delany's correspondence that, out of his winnings, he paid off all his debts, bought a house and furnished it, disposed of all his horses, hounds, &c., and struck his name out of all expensive subscriptions.

In the seventies a special costume for play was adopted which is thus described by Walpole in his *Last Journals*, February 6, 1772: “As the gaming and the extravagance of the young men of quality was arrived now at a pitch never heard of, it is worth while to give some account of it. They had a club at one Almack's in Pall Mall, where they played only for rouleaus of fifty pounds each rouleau; and generally there was £10,000 in specie on the table. Lord Holland had paid £20,000 for his two sons. Nor were the manners of the gamesters, or even their dresses for play, undeserving notice. They began by pulling off their embroidered clothes, and put on frieze great coats, or

turned their coats inside outwards for luck. They put on pieces of leather (such as worn by footmen when they clean the knives) to save their lace ruffles; and to guard their eyes from the light, and to prevent tumbling their hair, wore high crowned straw hats with broad brims and adorned with flowers and ribbons; masks to conceal their emotions when they played at Quinze. Each gamester had a small neat stand by him with a large rim, to hold his tea, or a wooden bowl with an edge of ormolu, to hold their rouleaus."

The costume seems quaint enough, but it had its purposes. Many of them were obvious; and if the flowers and ribbons seem rather out of harmony with their environment, the high straw hat would be a necessity for the Macaroni coiffure of the day. We have already heard of the "long curls" of the early Macaronis, but the huge hair-structures of the seventies were not in vogue in 1764:—

Five pounds of hair they wear behind,  
The ladies to delight, O;  
Their senses give unto the wind,  
To make themselves a fright, O.

This evidently refers to some period not later than 1772, when the Macaroni wore his hair, natural and otherwise, in an immense knot behind. But about 1772 the fashion was changed to a pinnacle of hair on the top of the head; and this no doubt necessitated the high straw hat. So far as can be judged from the caricatures and press of the period, the dress of the later Macaronis embodied a principle of extravagant contrasts: an enormous coiffure surmounted by a diminutive cocked hat, tightly cut clothes with a large tasselled walking-stick, small shoes and a big bouquet. "Even our Macaronis," says Walpole, on February 17, 1773, "entertain the town with nothing but the size of their nosegays. They have lost all their money and exhausted their credit, and can no longer game for twenty thousand pounds a night." *Primus inter pares* in this respect was young Lord Villiers, whom Mrs. Montagu described as the Prince of Macaronis. He made even his chairmen adorn themselves with bouquets, thereby earning

the title of "the Nosegay Macaroni." He married Lady Gertrude Seymour Conway in 1772, but matrimony was ineffectual to temper his Macaroni tastes, and in 1777 he had, in Walpole's phrase, "fashioned away" all his money. Fortunately his mother, Lady Grandison, was exceedingly rich, and the impecunious young couple found a refuge with her. The bouquet was a feature of the Macaroni outfit almost from the beginning. Carlisle alludes to it about 1768. Its vast size, however, seems to have been a later growth. *Apropos* of this, Walpole writes on September 3, 1773: "Lord Nuneham's garden is the quintessence of nosegays. I wonder some Macaroni does not offer ten thousand pounds for it." And absurdities of this kind were quite in keeping with the extravagances in all directions which marked the later days, at any rate, of the Macaronis. Walpole has an amusing hit at these. Speaking of a violent thunderstorm which occurred suddenly in March, 1772, he says: "I cannot but think that it was raised in a hot house, by order of the Macaronis, who *will* have everything before the season."

But so far as the early Macaronis are concerned, their dress, though perhaps over-elaborate, does not seem to have been fantastic or grotesque. *The Gentleman's Magazine* of March, 1770, waxes enthusiastic over a fancy dress worn by Carlisle at the famous Mrs. Cornely's, adding that it "shows that the universal opinion of the wearer's superior taste of dress of any kind has its foundation in truth."

Moreover, there was a good deal in the original Macaronis to redeem their follies. The travel on which they insisted was a humanising influence, and was unquestionably a reality. In those days of heavy postage rates travellers were much utilised as informal postmen; and the Macaronis were in great request for this purpose. When George Selwyn was on one of his frequent visits to Paris, Gilly Williams writes (December 1, 1764) to complain of his silence: "I wonder what the devil you do with yourself, *sic raro scribis!* I do not believe you think that I have a penny left in my pocket that you will not put me

to the expense of a letter, but wait till a d——d odd animal joins the Macaronis to save me twelvepence postage." And again (December 12, 1764): "I find, my dear George, if neither Macaronis nor French are on the road, our correspondence stops; so unwilling are you to put me to sixpence charge, when I assure you I would expend a much larger sum to hear you was well." A few years later Carlisle, writing from Paris to George Selwyn (December 7, 1768), says: "Mrs. Pett and Miss Floyd left us this morning. I have charged them to puff the spring exportation of Macaronis; we shall come in with the nosegays."

It is possible, however, that the Macaroni wanderings were not always very extensive, and that their travel was rather a social than a scientific pursuit. Carlisle, Fox, Crawford, and some others went further afield; but the goal of a good many of them seems to have been Paris. Under the conditions of the day this was natural enough. As far back as the times of Elizabeth and James I. there was a good deal of social intercourse between the upper classes of England and France; and though this had been interrupted, wholly or partially, till well into the eighteenth century, it was completely re-established in the reign of George III. The cordiality of this *entente* was rather remarkable. "George Selwyn is returned from Paris," writes Walpole on November 30, 1772. "He says our passion for everything French is nothing to theirs for everything English." Selwyn himself was a *persona gratissima* in the French capital, being intimate with all the distinguished people there, and a great favourite with Louis XV. In 1763 "the rage of going to Paris" began to attract the attention of the newspapers, who nicknamed it "the French disease." Walpole was rather inclined to laugh at it. He used to tell the French that they had adopted the two dullest things that England possessed—Whist and Richardson's novels. He professes himself unable to understand how they came by the character of a lively people, saying that he finds them "more lifeless than the Germans." Possibly he was feeling a little gouty when he expressed this opinion. At any rate, in the end,



he followed the fashion himself, and though it took him a full year—September, 1764, to September, 1765—to tear himself from his beloved Strawberry for a visit to Paris, he enjoyed himself hugely when he got there. Indeed, at that time Parisian society was far more brilliant than that of London, by reason of the larger opportunities that it offered to clever women. It was made a reproach by foreigners against Englishmen that their passion for play attracted them too strongly to clubs of men only, to the neglect of those mixed social gatherings “where researches of Taste and Literature constitute the basis and the central point of union.” London, it is true, made some efforts in this direction, as represented by the *salons* of Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Vesey, Mrs. Thrale, and others; but none of these would bear comparison with the brilliant literary assemblies of Paris. To men like Walpole and Selwyn these were naturally attractive; and though the Macaronis belonged to a younger generation,\* many of them shared the cultivated and artistic tastes of their elder associates. As the Macaronis degenerated this pleasant intercourse died away. The majority of those who poured into Paris in the later days had no claim to be admitted to French society, and threw away any chance of winning their way into it, by their open disregard of its conventions. They simply became the laughing-stocks of the *petits maîtres*, and the victims of the lively ladies of the Parisian stage, who used to call the summer months *la recolte des Jack-Roast-Beefs*.

The last years of the sixties saw the best of the Macaronis. They were then a comparatively small and select society, whose members were, on the whole, men of more than average attainments. Carlisle was a poet and a playwright. His plays were said to have had some merit, but his poetry has not impressed posterity as favourably as it impressed his contemporaries. Walpole admired it greatly. “Oh! George,” he writes to Selwyn (August 12, 1772), “were I such a poet as your friend [Carlisle], and possessed such a Parnassus, I would instantly scratch my name off the but-tery book at Almack’s; be admitted, *ad eundem*, among the

\* Horace Walpole was born in 1717 and George Selwyn in 1719.

Muses ; and save every doit to lay out in making a Helicon." Walpole admits, however, that though there is a real spirit of poetry in his verse, there is no invention. Carlisle's rank no doubt contributed to his advancement, but he could not have filled a succession of important political posts without decent talents to support his position. Socially, he was a charming figure, handsome, witty, and polished, intelligent and self-possessed. He is described by one of his biographers as having an ardent temperament, and the description seems justified by some of his letters. Like many of his contemporaries, from George III. downwards, he was in love at one time with the beautiful Lady Sarah Lennox ; but after his marriage in March, 1770, with Lady Caroline Leveson-Gower, he became a devoted husband and father. The only clouds on his early married life were the pressure of his losses at play, and his struggles—finally successful—to break away from the attractions of the gaming table. Both Carlisle and Fox in their relations to their elders show a certain precocity, which to us seems rather remarkable, though it was apparently accepted by the latter as a matter of course. Thus we find Fox, at the age of sixteen, gravely warning Sir George Macartney, some dozen years his senior, against being tempted into gambling by the deep play at St. Petersburg. Carlisle was elected to Almack's in 1765, and he and Selwyn were perpetually giving each other good advice on the subject of gambling, and as perpetually confessing their relapses to each other. George Selwyn does not seem to have stood much upon his dignity with anybody. Possibly he had not much dignity to stand upon ; but there is a good deal of—assurance, let us say—in the following commission from Carlisle, aged twenty, to Selwyn, aged forty-nine : "I wish you would speak to Foxcroft, in case he should have a pipe of exceeding good claret, to save it for me. I do not mean that you shall have anything to do in the choosing it for me, for you can drink ink and water if you are told it is claret. Get some body who understands it to taste it for you." (Jesse, *Selwyn*, ii. 292). It was difficult, no doubt, for these youngsters to treat with much deference the older men who gambled with them daily ; and the elders certainly could

not afford to be exacting. Carlisle, however, at heart was a thoroughly nice boy, with delightful boyish enthusiasms and a keen appreciation of good manners. These do not seem to have been always beyond reproach, even in the select circle of White's. Carlisle remarks, in a letter to Selwyn from Nice: "I wish the Old Club could be sent abroad to learn manners, and forget all their own customs: we should see Fanshawe and Reynolds bowing to one another who should go out of the room first, each of them with as high a *Grec* as my own." He had also a wholesome taste for sport and exercise, and rallies Selwyn on the difference between their habits. Writing from Spa (August 28, 1768), he says: "I rise at six; am on horseback till breakfast; play at cricket till dinner; and dance in the evening till I can scarce crawl to bed at eleven. There is a life for you. You get up at nine; play with Raton [a dog] till twelve in your nightgown; then creep down to White's to abuse Fanshawe." We also hear of him shooting and hunting, and playing tennis till his hand trembles. This was after a game with Colonel Henry St. John, called "the Baptist" by his intimates. St. John combined with the tastes of a Macaroni a prodigious appetite for reading, as is shown by the formidable list of books which he commissions from Selwyn on November 21, 1766. He was Groom of the Bedchamber to George III., and sat as member for Wootton Bassett. He became a member of Almack's in 1764. His brother John, who was elected at Almack's in 1769, has been described as a typical Macaroni. He was rather a successful playwright and a poet. Selwyn says of him that he "uses Helicon as habitually as others do a cold bath." His taste, however, was not always too nice; and Selwyn deprecates his making the miseries of the French Royalties during the Revolution a matter of profit and a subject for "evening spectacles." Like many of the original Macaronis, he was a busy politician, and sat for some years as member for Eye.

But the strangest tribute to Macaronidom was offered by his elder brother Frederick, second Viscount Bolingbroke, familiarly known as "Bully," who joined Almack's in 1764. He writes this curious letter to Selwyn in Paris: "I will tell

you of one [a reformation] that has happened in private life. Lord Bolingbroke is more like a gentleman than he has latterly been, and mixes more in the polite world . . . and as Lord B. much admires the taste and elegance of Colonel St. John's Parisian clothes, he wishes Mr. Selwyn would order Le Duc to make him a suit of plain velvet. By plain, is meant without gold or silver; as to the colours, pattern, and design of it, he relies upon Mr. Selwyn's taste. A small pattern seems to be the reigning taste among the Macaronis at Almack's, and is therefore what Lord B. desires. Le Duc, however, must be desired to make the clothes bigger than the generality of Macaronis, as Lord B.'s shoulders have lately grown very broad. As to the smallness of the sleeves, and the length of the waist, Lord B. desires them to be *outré*, that he may exceed any Macaronis now about town, and become the object of their envy."

"Bully," however, seems to have been rather a weak vessel generally, and for some time his domestic troubles weighed upon his mind. In 1757 he had married the beautiful and talented Lady Diana Spencer. She was altogether his intellectual superior, and the marriage was not a happy one. According to Boswell he ill-treated her, but it is certain that she was unfaithful to him, and he obtained a divorce from her on March 10, 1768. Two days later she married Topham Beauclerk, only son of Lord Sidney Beauclerk, and a grandson of the first Duke of St. Albans, and one of the most brilliant of the early Macaronis. He became a member of Almack's in 1764. We hear from a letter of Gilly Williams to Selwyn of December 26, 1766, that Beauclerk, in the course of his travels, had lost £10,000 in gambling at Venice. But he was a universal favourite, and completely won his way even to the rugged heart of the great Johnson, to whom he was introduced by Bennet Langton. After his first surprise that Langton should associate with such a loose character, the Doctor yielded to the fascination of a man gifted "with so ardent a care of literature, so acute an understanding, and such elegance of manners." Well might Garrick exclaim, "What a coalition! I shall have my old friend to bail out of the Round

House." But, notwithstanding a certain amount of friction, this strange friendship remained unbroken till Beauclerk's death in March, 1780. His bitter tongue and readiness to challenge Johnson's claim to absorb conversation frequently gave rise to some sharp disputes. Johnson himself remarks, "There is a tendency in Beauclerk to predominance over his company," and it is plain that the Doctor did not always relish this rivalry. But Beauclerk was "too polite, and valued learning and wit too highly, to offend Johnson by sallies of infidelity or licentiousness," and Johnson, while striving to correct the younger man's evil habits, always delighted in his better qualities. He declared that he was disposed to envy Beauclerk's talents more than those of any man he knew; and when Beauclerk was on his deathbed Johnson exclaimed, in a voice faltering with emotion, "Sir, I would walk to the extent of the diameter of the earth to save Beauclerk." Boswell gives an amusing account of Langton and Beauclerk knocking up Johnson at three in the morning to join them "in a ramble." Johnson came to the door armed with a poker, and "with his little black wig on the top of his head instead of a night-cap." But, on recognising his visitors, he exclaimed, "What, is it you, you dogs? I'll have a frisk with you." And he did. The three betook themselves to Covent Garden, much to the surprise of the market gardeners, who were bringing in their produce; and thence, after a bowl of "Bishop," Johnson's favourite drink, at a tavern, went for a row on the Thames down to Billingsgate.

Lady Di proved a devoted wife to Beauclerk, nursing him tenderly during his last illness, but her life with him was not happy, and his death was probably a relief to her.

Among other prominent members of the original Macaroni group may be mentioned Richard Fitzpatrick\* (elected at Almack's in 1766), the bosom friend of Fox and his associate in all his excesses. In 1781 the two friends tried to restore their fallen fortunes by starting a Faro bank at Brooks's. This was conducted in such a manner as to become a public

\* See p. 104.

scandal; but it was very profitable to the bankers. Fitzpatrick retired from it with £100,000, and, more prudent than Fox, never played again. He sat for Tavistock in 1780, and was subsequently a successful Secretary of War. He was a handsome and gallant soldier, and in his lighter hours something of a poet. So fine were his manners that the Duke of Queensberry left him an annuity as a substantial tribute to their charm; and he belonged to the brilliant circle which gathered round George IV. in his earlier years. James Hare and Anthony Morris Storer, both elected at Almack's in 1771, were Eton friends of Fox and Carlisle. Hare's nickname, "the Hare with many friends," speaks by itself of his popularity in society. As a boy he was considered more brilliant than Fox, even by Fox himself, who, on being complimented on his maiden speech in Parliament, replied, "Wait till you hear Hare speak." These expectations were not fulfilled when Hare entered Parliament as member for Knaresborough. Wraxall remarks of him in later life that "socially, for ingenuity, classical discrimination, and sound judgment, Hare was almost unrivalled." Storer and Carlisle were known at Eton as Orestes and Pylades. Storer accompanied Carlisle on his mission to America in 1778, and remained in close friendship with him till 1793, when there seems to have been a rupture. Possibly this was due to a bilious derangement which in later life affected Storer's temper and character considerably. But, apart from this, he was a very Crichton in the versatility of his accomplishments. In conversation and literary knowledge, as a musician, a gymnast, a skater, and a dancer, he was in the front rank; and the library which he bequeathed to his old school is a solid proof of his cultivated tastes. Shooting appears to have been a weak point, as he admits, in a letter to Selwyn of September 10, 1779, to "destroying more ammunition than game" when shooting at Castle Howard. He, too, was a gambler, and we hear through Selwyn of his "losing, like a simple boy, his money at Charles's and Richard's [Fitzpatrick] damned Pharo bank."\*

\* He is frequently confounded with his younger brother, James, and his surname is variously spelt.

John Craufurd—"le petit Craufurt" of Madame du Deffand—must have been rather a trying little creature. From his insatiable curiosity he was called "the Fish," and in spite of his cleverness seems to have been rather tolerated than liked. He was vain, jealous, and rather exacting. Selwyn writes of him (December 19, 1775): "I think verily he grows more tiresome every day, and everybody's patience is *à bout*, except Smith's and Sir George's." Walpole, writing to Lady Ossory on June 11, 1773, says: "I have asked Mr. Craufurd to meet you, but begged he would refuse me, that I might be sure of his coming." He was, however, a friend of Voltaire's, and rather a favourite with Madame du Deffand. He was not a success in Parliament, and writes an amusing account to Stephen Fox of his first speech. "I know, dear Ste, that you will be delighted to hear that I had the misfortune to speak a few days ago in the House of Commons. If I was the oldest and dearest friend you had in the world, you could not have wished me to succeed worse than I did. . . . I know this news will give you great pleasure, and it is out of perfect kindness that I send it to you." The letter is also interesting as showing incidentally Charles Fox's keen sense of friendship. Craufurd goes on to say: "Charles was not ashamed to acknowledge me in my distress. He explained and defended what I had said with spirit, warmth, and great kindness to me." The only man expressly described as a Macaroni by Walpole does not seem to have had a particularly distinguished career. "Lady Falkener's daughter," he writes (May 27, 1764), "is to be married to a young rich Mr. Crewe, a Macarone, and one of our Loo." This was the Crewe who joined with Carlisle in supporting Fox's pecuniary burdens; and if not otherwise a celebrity himself, he shone to some extent in the reflected glories of his wife. For Mrs. Crewe became a fashionable beauty, and, if Richard Fitzpatrick's lines can be trusted, something of a flirt:—

The faithful hand can unobserved impart  
 The secret feelings of a tender heart:  
 And oh! what bliss, when each alike is pleased,  
 The hand that squeezes and the hand that's squeezed.

She and her sister, Mrs. Bouverie, also a beauty, were painted together as shepherdesses by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

In connection with the early Macaronis there is one remarkable figure which deserves a passing notice—William Douglas, third Earl of March, who became in 1778 fourth Duke of Queensberry, and whose memory as “Old Q.” still survives. Born in 1725, he was nearly a generation older than Fox and his contemporaries, yet the popular voice placed him among the Macaronis, though his type was rather that of the later Beaux. The following is the first stanza of some verses written in 1773 by Captain Thompson with reference to his supposed engagement to Lady Henrietta Stanhope:—

Say, Jockey Lord, adventurous Macaroni,  
So spruce, so old, so dapper, stiff, and starch,  
Why quit the amble of thy pacing pony?  
Why on a filly risk the name of March?

A small pony on which to take the air and pay visits was part of the regular outfit of a Macaroni.

O Charlotte, I've a glorious theme,  
You may get money by my scheme  
Ev'n from the Macaronis;  
Gallini's fops, who trip at balls  
Shall breast the cold air (wrapt in shawls),  
Astride their little ponies.  
—*New Foundling Hospital of Wit*, ii. 13.

Gallini was a dancing-master and manager of the Haymarket Theatre. The following couplet occurs in a poem written by J. West in 1787:—

In Hyde Park I met a hump-back'd Macarony,  
Who was pleased I should see how he managed his pony.

“Old Q.’s” notorious vices have obscured his better qualities. In later life he spent a good deal of his wealth in charity; he was not without some artistic tastes, and he was devoted to music. Carlisle, writing from Turin on January 4, 1768, says: “Our opera here is very magnificent;



Lord March would be in raptures." He was greatly attached to his friends, particularly George Selwyn, to whom he more than once gave some sound practical advice about his hysterical fussiness over "Mie, Mie."\* He was, moreover, in all respects a man of his word, and even when, as he sometimes was in his earlier days, hard pushed for money, he never failed to meet his obligations.

And now this may be said of "Q,"  
That long he ran all Folly thro',  
For ever seeking something new:  
He never cared for me, nor you,  
But, to engagements strictly true,  
At last he gave the Devil his due;  
And died a boy—at eighty-two—  
Poor "Q" of Piccadilly.

He did not actually die, however, till 1810, six years later than the date of these lines.

The responsibilities of a member of Parliament in the eighteenth century were, of course, less onerous than they are at the present day; but a large number of the original Macaronis seem to have gone into Parliamentary life. Gilly Williams writes to George Selwyn on the eve of an election: "We are full at White's, but the Macaronis are all at their respective burroughs." To a certain extent also the Macaronis gave expression to the reviving taste for things artistic, which had languished sadly under the two first Georges. The opera in those days had a severe struggle for existence in England, and had usually to be subsidised by private individuals or societies. In 1743 it was supported by the Dilettanti Club. This was a society founded in 1734 by some travelled connoisseurs to promote a taste for foreign art in England. Like the Macaronis, it made travel a condition of membership; but it appears also to have had some convivial aspects. This, at any rate, was Walpole's opinion, for he describes it as "a club for which the nominal qualification is having been in Italy, and the real one, being

\* The daughter of the Marquis Fagniani. She was ultimately adopted by George Selwyn, and married the Earl of Yarmouth (afterwards third Marquis of Hertford) in 1798.

drunk" (letter to Mann, April 14, 1743). In 1762 the *Scavoir Vivre* Club, which afterwards became Boodle's, arose as a supporter of the opera and of the arts generally, giving annual prizes for artistic productions. Walpole observes in 1759 that "politics are the only hotbed for keeping such a tender plant as Italian music alive in England." Operatic music, moreover, was challenged by the rival art of dancing. "Our operas go *au plus misérable*; all our hopes lie in a new dancer, Sodi." Thus Walpole wrote on November 14, 1742, to Mann; and in 1771 dancing seems clearly to have been in the ascendant. The Macaronis followed the stream, and supported the prevailing theatrical taste in art. In 1773 a Mademoiselle Heinel appeared at the Opera House as a dancer, "whose grace and execution were so perfect as to eclipse all other excellence." She received a salary of six hundred a year from the management, "and was complimented with a *regallo* of six hundred more from the Macaroni Club."

Ye travelled tribe, ye Macaroni train,  
Of French friseurs and nosegays justly vain;  
Who take a trip to Paris once a year,  
To dress and look like awkward Frenchmen here;  
Lend me your hands,—O fatal news to tell,  
Their hands are only lent to the Heinel.

These lines appear to an intended epilogue to *She Stoops to Conquer*, which was first produced on March 15, 1773.

Politics may sound a strange nursery for music, but in the earlier part of the reign of George II. the friction between the King and Frederick, Prince of Wales, drove the Court and Leicester House to range themselves under rival musical banners. The King, the Queen, and the Princess of Orange supported Handel at the Haymarket Opera, while the Prince of Wales and his followers favoured the opera in Lincoln's Inn Fields. To such lengths was this antagonism carried, that "Handelists" and "anti-Handelists" became synonymous with courtier and anti-courtier. Walpole, though at one time a Director

of the Opera, frequently admits his indifference to music, adding on one occasion, "The company I keep are far from Handelians." He tells us in 1743 that "Handel has set up an Oratorio against the Operas, and succeeds," though he intimates that the singers are inferior. A little later in the same year he writes: "The Oratorios thrive abundantly—for my part, they give me an idea of heaven, where everybody is to sing whether they have voices or not."

The Macaronis, moreover, were something more than *arbitri elegantiarum*, for they appear to have been regarded as a sort of informal tribunal which might take cognizance of gross offences against courtesy or good manners. In 1768 Temple Luttrell published some outrageous verses on Lady Isabella Stanhope; in reference to which Carlisle writes to Selwyn: "I do not think you wanted old boars in your house, that such young pigs as Mr. Luttrell should begin to torment you. What an infamous copy of verses were in the papers upon Lady B. Stanhope! Why do not the Macaronis exert themselves upon such occasions?" The expression "boars" recalls another claim sometimes made on behalf of the Macaronis. They are supposed to have invented the use of the word "bore," or "boar," in our modern sense. Whether this be so or not, it is evident from the letters of Gilly Williams, Lord March, Henry St. John, Carlisle, Lord Grantham, and others, that the word was a new piece of slang about 1766-7, as it is invariably italicised by the writers. Lord March once employs it in a sense which it has now lost, writing to Selwyn that "Augustus Hervey and Cadogan are in a long *bore*. When they have finished, if they tell me anything you shall know it."

George Selwyn had a great dislike to the expression. Lady Di Beauclerk, in a letter to him, after making her meaning obvious, adds, "I dare not write the word, because you seem to have such an objection to it; and as I am quite ignorant of its *sens radical*, it is better not to use it."

It will now be seen how widely the original Macaronis were removed from the anæmic monstrosities who figured

in the press of the seventies. But even in the early days there were Macaronis of the baser sort, whose lives were wholly devoted to gambling, dissipation, and extravagance generally. Lord Foley and his brother may be taken as specimens of this class. One of them was obliged to cross the Channel hurriedly to escape his liabilities in England; upon which Selwyn observed that this was a Passover not much relished by the Jews. Hare, himself a heavy gambler, is moved to exclaim against the excesses of Lord Foley. He writes in an amusing letter to George Selwyn on the subject:—

“Foley, from an apprehension that his income will exceed his establishment, and that he shall have more money than he can devise means of spending, has engaged again on the turf, in confederacy with Derby, who likewise is encumbered with great sums of money. Seriously, George, it is quite unpardonable folly in both of them.”

Walpole, writing to Mann about the two Foleys in 1776, says that they “have borrowed money so extravagantly, that the interest they have contracted to pay amounts to eighteen thousand pounds a year. I write the sum at length, lest you should think I have mistaken, and set down two or three figures too much.”

With many of the better Macaronis Walpole was on terms of intimacy or even friendship, but he repeatedly denounces the excesses of the Macaronis as a class. In a letter to Mann of July 11, 1773, he describes England as “a sink of Indian wealth, filled by Nabobs, and emptied by Macaronis.” He continually insisted that the East India Company had starved millions in India in order to get rich, and they had almost caused a famine at home by the artificial inflation of prices which the extravagant luxury of the Nabobs produced. He epitomises this neatly in a letter to Mann of April 9, 1772: “Lord Chatham begot the East India Company; the East India Company begot Lord Clive, Lord Clive begot the Macaronis, and they begot poverty; all the race are alive.”

Walpole hated Lord Clive and the East India Company, and lost no opportunity of saying so; but it is possible

that this influx into England of Eastern wealth may have caused a financial derangement similar to that produced in Germany by the payment of the French indemnity after the Franco-Prussian War. There certainly was a crisis in the summer of 1772.

But in 1776 the degeneracy of the Macaronis had distinctly set in. The name was no longer confined to a select circle, but was beginning to be applied generally to a host of imitators in the lower ranks of society, in whom the follies of the movement came chiefly to the front. Thus we hear that in 1773 the Macaronis used to run races in Kensington Gardens on Sunday evenings, "to the high amusement and contempt of the mob; and yet the mob will be ambitious of being fashionable, and will run races too." At the end of 1773 we hear that the Macaronis "are all undone"; for, as Walpole significantly puts it, "Pactolus is run dry both in Bengal and at Almack's." There is no more gambling for £20,000 at a sitting. Almack's itself disappears by absorption into Brooks's in 1778. The magnificence of the Macaronis perishes; and though their name descends, it is upon a feebler folk, without their redeeming qualities, who do but imitate or exaggerate their absurdities. In July, 1777, Walpole speaks of "Maccaronesses," showing how the term had widened since the early Almack days. Indeed, after the middle of the seventies, it lost all trace of any class distinction, and Macaronis sprang up in every social stratum. In some verses called *The Will of a Macaroni*, which appeared in *The Universal Magazine* for September, 1774, the testator is represented as leaving legacies to the "Macs" of the Bar, the Army, Medicine, the Church, and Trade. Very soon afterwards the name Macaronis began to be applied indiscriminately to all the fast young men about town, and indeed to the enterprising youth of either sex. In this usage a "Macaroni" became practically equivalent to a "rowdy." Vauxhall Gardens, particularly on the closing night of the season, was a favourite arena for the sportiveness of these young people. Thus we hear that on September 4, 1774, "upwards of fifteen foolish Bucks, who

had amused themselves by breaking the lamps at Vauxhall, were put into the Cage by the proprietors to answer for the damage done." And in the *Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine* for September, 1773, p. 529, there is a picture showing "The Macaroney Beaus and Bells in uproar, on the last evening of Vauxhall Gardens." It is only fair to the shades of the early Macaronis to add that, judging by their appearance, these "Beaus and Bells" were rather a low class lot. But this later usage was obviously a misapplication of the name: for the Macaroni, early or late, whatever else he may have been, was essentially an exquisite; and the charge of effeminacy and cowardice, so freely levelled at the later Macaronis, is quite inconsistent with their being bullies or roysterers.

Confining ourselves therefore to the Macaronis proper, it is possible to detect an intermediate stage between the early and late Macaronis; a stage at which the Macaroni was a fop, but not a brainless fop, and possessed a saving sense of humour. *The Gentleman's Magazine* for March, 1767, gives some imaginary extracts from the journal of a Man of Taste. On the 1st of September he goes into the country, partly to avoid the *canaille*, and partly because he would have the world believe that he was staying with "an elegant party in Northamptonshire." But the solitude of the farmhouse to which he has retired is more than he can endure, and he returns to London the next day.

"*September 10th.* Better spirits—my steward brings a draught for six hundred. I look tolerably well—and Lagaburette has hit off my hair very becoming. I shall commit some slaughter to-day, and so I'll e'en go to Court.

"*September 11th.* Dine with Dr. T—— and Sir Thomas L——. A deistical dispute wherein I shine—knock up the Doctor, and drive Sir Thomas L—— to his *ne plus ultra*, by insisting on his fixing the locality of hell."

Then follows a sad misfortune: Lagaburette burns one of his best curls, and he is obliged to keep at home for a fortnight, finally submitting, much to his mortification, to wear a *demi-perruque*. During his forced retirement

he takes to literature : “ Read three pages of Locke without understanding him. Write an ode to Lady L——, which the printer of the *Public Advertiser* refuses to insert, as being personal and deficient in measure—was there ever such insolence ! ”

“ *October 2nd.* Wait upon my Lady L——, and find *Tristram Shandy* upon her toilet—She desires me to explain the stars. I excuse myself by telling her I have not read it, and ask her what she thinks of Locke. She blushes—is confused—and is surprised I should put so indecent a question to her.”

This man is clearly above the lowest level of Macaroni. To a certain extent he is in touch with the philosophy and the half-execrated, half-fashionable Deism of the day. It is a cheap sort of culture, no doubt, and his knowledge is shallow enough ; but he is certainly not “ the sworn foe of all learning,” and he is, moreover, a man of certain social position.

There is one humble boon, however, for which all of us, high and low, owe a debt of gratitude to the latter day Macaronis—our umbrellas. When this deserving implement was first introduced into England by Jonas Hanway, he was mobbed for carrying it in the streets ; and it might easily have succumbed to the unreasonable antipathy of the populace but for the Macaronis. These intrepid innovators kept the umbrella aloft till it had weathered the storm and became part of the established order of things.

The differences which distinguished the early from the later Macaronis make it difficult to get a comprehensive view of them as a whole. But, putting aside their follies and vices, the Macaronis, early and late, did adopt—not always wisely or too well—an attitude towards some of the tastes and habits of the age which was worthy, perhaps, of better champions. Society was just emerging from the low civilisation of the first two Georges. This had been a period of gross tastes and grosser morals, in which culture and the arts generally had received little recognition from the Court or the upper ranks of society. With George III. came the beginning of a new state of things. His private

morals were respectable, and in early life he showed, according to Walpole, "a great propensity in the arts." Yet it was not till quite the latter part of his reign that painters (Sir Joshua Reynolds alone excepted), sculptors, or architects were received into the best society. Literature had not fared much better. Walpole had attempted, and with some success, to make literary pursuits fashionable, but the ordinary man of letters did not count for much.\* When *long* Sir Thomas Robinson took possession of Rokeby, he found a portrait of Richardson among the pictures, and was so shocked at the idea of a mere Mr. Richardson hanging in company with persons of quality that he had a star and blue ribbon added to the picture and turned it into a portrait of Sir Robert Walpole. When the original Macaronis appeared, though they inaugurated an advance, they did not in any way pose as reformers. They were perfectly content with the life of society as they found it, and made no effort to alter it. But their instincts did tend towards the quickening and broadening of it by the influences of travel, literature, and art; and they showed by living examples that these influences need not paralyse the activity of the man of the world or the politician, or even the feverish energy of the man of fashion. And as the original Macaronis thus held open the door for culture, so their successors did something to promote a greater regard for the decencies of life. When the worst has been said of their fooleries and affectations, the fact still remains that they did represent a tendency to refinement in an age which was sorely in need of it. The bitterness of the abuse to which they were subjected betrays unmistakable traces of the irritation which is peculiar to the sinner rebuked. The fine scorn poured by *The Universal Magazine* on the Macaroni tea-drinker smacks strongly of a critic who gloried and drank deep; and it is instructive to notice that in the play of *The Macaroni*, already referred to, the chief

\* Their low esteem lasted for some time. The following is an extract from the *News and Sunday Herald* of December 10, 1835: "'Are any literary men members of White's?' 'None except Croker. They are considered as vermin in the fashionable clubs.'"



reproaches against the hero are the mildness of his imprecations and his respect for a woman's honour.

In one sense the Macaronis merely represented an outburst of dandyism, though it was a dandyism with certain distinctive features of its own. It showed some affinity with the ideas of the Troubadours, and had just a prophetic tinge of the Souls. Moreover, it possessed a vitality very uncommon in similar freaks of fashion. These, as a rule, are mere bubbles in the stream, passing efflorescences on the surface of society which have no part in its organic growth. But the marked impression which the Macaronis produced shows that they were, for good or evil, a real social force. Jowett used to say that every man ought to be "very"—something. This is a test from which the Macaronis would not have shrunk; and herein is probably to be found the explanation of their influence. They were very extravagant, very brilliant, or very fantastic, and not unfrequently all three; but in one form or another the requisite superlative was always present. When they appeared the existing order of things was beginning to pass away; and they may be compared to the momentary blaze which shoots up as a waning fire falls in, or the delusive rally in a dying man which sometimes precedes the end. As one of the lesser beacons of social history they help to mark the point where the tastes and traditions of the Georgian era begin to break up, making way for the intellectual and spiritual awakening of the age which is fitly consecrated to the name of Victoria.

## XI. GENTLEMEN OF THE ROAD

**A**N intelligent foreigner who saw with amazement the seething traffic of a London street meekly obedient to the ordaining hand of a policeman paid a fervent tribute of admiration to the law-abiding character of the English. On the whole, with some reservations, this soft impeachment is just. But it was not ever thus ; our present respect for the law is of comparatively recent growth, and Britains of the past would compare favourably for lawlessness with the most turbulent races of antiquity. As late as the middle of the fourteenth century England lay helpless in the hand of the robber. Professional marauders there were in plenty, but all classes took an occasional hand in the game. Barons, knights, abbots, and so forth, robbed and raided freely. Thus we hear of two abbots and a prior organising a foray upon some land of the Countess of Lincoln. Three knights, with a following of sixty men, including many chaplains, broke into a close belonging to the Archbishop of Canterbury and carried off crops and cattle. A knight, a parson, and two other clergy burglariously entered the house of a Prebendary of York. The courts themselves were often invaded by armed bands of robbers, who obstructed justice with brawling and bloodshed. Villages and towns were attacked and plundered, particularly on the occasion of some fair or festival. In 1288 Boston was set on fire and pillaged by a gang of desperadoes disguised as monks. In 1347 Bristol was seized and occupied by a brigand chief, who made himself master of the city and port, administered its revenues, and issued proclamations in royal style. Even towns would at times break out into a sort of municipal brigandage ; Yarmouth, for instance, having a trained band of three hundred men who

marched out to plunder the neighbourhood under the town colours.

The highwaymen of later days represented the last flicker of this turbulent spirit; but though they figured largely in the life of the times, our records of them are neither many nor valuable. Practically there is little beyond the floating tales which passed current in ballads and chap-books, till they crystallised in the uncritical pages of Alexander Smith. Still he provides us with plenty to choose from. In his *History of Highwaymen* fable is welcomed, it is true, without the smallest scrutiny, but its record is not altogether untrustworthy, and even his wildest stories may well contain a nucleus of fact. Robin Hood, we fear, is at best semi-fabulous; and the same must be said of Thomas Dun, who is supposed to have harried the country between St. Albans and Towcester so severely that Henry I. was compelled to build Dunstable to "bridle the outrageousness of this Dun." Sir Gosselin Denvile, by whom Edward II. is said to have been robbed, is a somewhat clearer figure. Ercedene the knight seems to be historical.

The highwaymen of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are on a smaller scale altogether, but they have a special attraction of their own. This is partly due to their comparative propinquity. It is hardly more than a century since the tune of "Damme, stand and deliver!" (as it was described by a semi-repentant thief) rang merrily through the land, and armed robbers infested the streets of London. But their chief interest is due to a generous tradition which has crowned them with a certain halo of romance. They are regarded as something above the level of the vulgar thief: robbers of distinction, with a grand air, a fine sense of honour, and as much chivalrous forbearance as was compatible with a strict attention to business. Speaking of the highwaymen of the seventeenth century, a sympathetic historian declares that "they were scholars as well as gentlemen; they tempered their sport with a merry wit, and they robbed with so perfect a regard to the proprieties that it was only the prig or the parliamentarian who resented their interference" (*A Book of Scoundrels*, C. Whibley)

Even the witchery of Mr. Whibley's pen fails to convince us entirely on this point ; but it may be conceded that if any highwaymen deserved such a character it was those of the seventeenth century.

Claude Du Vall is the classical specimen of this school ; and his coranto on the heath was certainly a most happy inspiration. The story as given by a decidedly unfriendly writer \* is to be found in the *Harleian Miscellany*, iii. 309). It calls up rather a piquant scene. We see the heavy carriage with its treasure-load of £400 lumbering along in the waning light, and shadowed the while by Du Vall and his nimble gang. The robbers begin to close in upon the travellers, when the cool, clear notes of a flageolet suddenly pour out into the night. The lady in the carriage is playing to proclaim that she at least has no fear. The challenge was flung out at Du Vall the highwayman ; Du Vall the musician took it up. Producing his own flageolet, he joined her for a while in an improvised duet, then riding up to the carriage begged that he might " have the honour to dance one currant with her on the heath." " Sir," said the knight, her husband, " I dare not deny anything to one of your quality and good mind ; you seem a gentleman, and your request is very reasonable." Then came the dance, wherein Du Vall—who sang the " currant " himself for want of an orchestra—" performed marvels ; the best master in London, except those that are French, not being able to show such footing as he did in his great riding French boots." After duly escorting the lady to her carriage, Du Vall suggested payment " for the music." The knight handed him a bag of £100, " which Du Vall took with a very good grace, and courteously answered, ' Sir, you are liberal, and shall have no cause to repent your being so ; this liberality of yours shall excuse you the other three hundred pounds ' ; and giving him the word, that if he met with any more of his crew he might pass undisturbed, he civilly takes his leave of him."

There is a whimsical grace about the story which makes one hope that it may be true. But, if the *Harleian* writer

\* Walter Pope : see *supra*, p. 24.

is to be trusted, Du Vall was not always in this melting mood. We hear an ugly tale of his robbing a baby of its silver bottle and being forced by his comrades to restore it. It is only fair, however, to add that there is another account of this incident. In *Celebrated Trials* (ii. 334) it is said to be one of the gang who took the bottle, and Du Vall who compelled him to return it, exclaiming, "Sirrah, can't you behave like a gentleman and raise a contribution without stripping people?" This version is much truer to the Du Vall of tradition; and in his words (if his they be) there rings a note which never wholly died away. Wholesale plunder is the work of the common thief; a "gentleman" of the road should not stoop to it. His war with society must be stern, but it need not be ruthless; and the victor should deal generously with the necessities of the vanquished. Leave the traveller enough for his immediate needs, and any one of his belongings which he specially values, leave him that too. James Hind, a generation earlier than Du Vall, is said to have founded this tradition, which crops up continually in the seventeenth century, and has left its traces on the eighteenth. Du Vall was a miller's son, and seems to have been born in 1643 at Domfront in Normandy. It was a birthplace curiously appropriate to his career. As the story goes, his burial fees were paid by his father at the time of his christening. The Curé of Domfront, having found by experience that "all that were born at Domfront were hanged at Rouen," had apparently introduced this custom "to keep his parishioners from hanging, and encouraging them to die at home." At the age of thirteen or fourteen the young Du Vall went to Paris, where he seems to have made acquaintance with some young English gentlemen, one of whom took him over to England in 1660 as a valet. The post of a livery servant is described by the authors of the *Newgate Calendar* (ii. 481) as "a ready road to the gallows"; and so it turned out in Du Vall's case. Drink, gambling, and other excesses soon reduced him to poverty, and he took to the road to restore his fortunes. He is naïvely described by the *London Gazette* as a man "of singular parts and learning, though he could

neither read nor write." He seems to have been skilled in dancing and to have had some knowledge of music; and in his position as a bodyservant he may easily have acquired some of the manners of good society as well as its vices. We know little of the details of his career; but he soon became famous for his gallantries as well as for his exploits on the highway, and he found it prudent to recross the Channel. France, however, gave but a cold welcome to her errant son, and he returned to England, where he was soon afterwards arrested and sentenced to death. He was hanged on January 21, 1669; and the Harleian chronicler gives a most circumstantial account of his obsequies. While he lay in Newgate under sentence of death he was visited, we are told, by "a great company of ladies, and those not of the meanest degree," who petitioned for his pardon and accompanied him to the gallows. After his execution he was said to have been cut down by his fashionable sympathisers and conveyed to the Tangier Tavern in St. Giles's, where he lay in state all night. The room was hung with black cloth, the hearse covered with escutcheons; eight wax tapers burned before it and "as many tall gentlemen with long black clothes" kept vigil. The next day there came a strong intimation from Judge Morton that this mummary was to cease. So the highwayman's remains were duly transferred to Covent Garden Church, and there we are told "he lies in the middle aisle under a plain white marble stone, whereon are curiously engraved the Du Vall's arms," and under them an epitaph, somewhat broad in tone, perhaps, for consecrated quarters.\*

This is the figure which popular fancy has chosen as the type of all that was best in the highwayman of the seventeenth century. Its trappings are not strictly historical, but this hardly detracts from its interest; for though it may not

\* No trace of this monument now remains. Possibly it perished when the church was burnt in 1795. But I understand from inquiries addressed to the present Rector that no memory or tradition of it is known to him, and I am informed by Mr. H. E. Wall, who has been kind enough to search the Registers for me, that he can find no record of the highwayman's burial. The whole story seems rather doubtful.

present us with a portrait of the actual highwayman, it stands as an emblem of his highest aspirations. We see in it not so much what he was, as what he might be. The chivalrous highwayman has been a good deal exaggerated in later story, but he is something more than a mere fable. Nor is this at all surprising when we see of what the forces of the highway were composed. It is clear that many gentlemen who had squandered their fortunes took to the road in the vain hope of restoring them. The *Newgate Calendar* (i. 308) tells us of a Baronet highwayman, one Sir Simon Clarke, who was convicted in 1731 of a highway robbery at Winchester. Powerful influence, however, was brought into play, and a reprieve was obtained on account of the "antiquity, worth, and dignity of his ancestors, and their services to their King and country," and the youth and "melancholy circumstances" of the culprit himself. This was evidently an exceptional case, but it shows how prominent a possibility "the road" was, even to the upper classes of the eighteenth century.

After the downfall of Charles I. the ranks of the highway were joined by many of the ruined cavaliers: indeed, Mr. Harper declares that at this period it was difficult to say where the cavalier ended and the highwayman began. (*Half-hours with Highwaymen*, i. 3). This cavalier element certainly leavened the lump, and we find that the sympathies of the early highwaymen were strongly Royalist. James Hind was the son of a saddler at Chipping Norton, and was born in 1616. He was apprenticed to a butcher, but he ran away to London at the age of fifteen, where his dissolute habits soon got him into trouble. During one of his imprisonments he fell in with Robert Allen, and subsequently joined a band of highway robbers under Allen's command. On his very first robbery the incident occurred which inspired the tradition above referred to. A traveller from whom he had taken ten guineas protested piteously that in his penniless condition he would be unable to get home. Hind was touched, and handed him back a guinea, saying, "This is for handsel sake." After Allen's capture Hind plied his business alone, and soon

became almost a national character. A rumour also arose that he bore a charmed life. Once near Hatfield he was accosted by an old hag who begged alms. Hind gave her five shillings and was about to ride on, when she stopped him and said, “ ‘ Captain Hind, you may ride and go through many dangers ; whereupon by my poor skill I have thought out a way to preserve you for three years, but the time being past, you are no more then an ordinary man, and a mischance may fall on you as well as another, but if you be in England come to me and I will renew the vertue of this charm again.’ ” In saying these words she pul’d out of her bosome a little box almost like a sundial and gave it unto Capt. Hind and said unto him, ‘ When you are in any distress open this, and that way you see the star turns, ride or go that way, and you shall escape all danger.’ ” With these words she struck Hind’s horse smartly with a switch ; the animal bounded forward, and before Hind could turn to thank her she was gone. He took a huge delight in robbing Roundheads, lecturing them severely the while upon the errors of their ways. As a specialist in this line he was rather fortunate, for fate threw into his hands at different times Peters, Bradshaw, and Harrison, the regicides, and once he nearly captured the great Oliver himself. He fought for the King at Colchester, Youghall, and Worcester. In 1649 we hear of him at The Hague, and later on in Ireland. He was wounded at Youghall, but escaped to Scilly. After spending some months there he went to the Isle of Man, where he contrived to get introduced to the Governor, the Earl of Derby, who found some sort of a post for him. But his sporting instincts were too strong, and he soon began to rob the simple islanders, in the disguise of a savage hairy man. Complaints were made to the Governor, who immediately taxed him with the offence. Hind indignantly denied it, and begged to be confronted with the complainants. These of course failed to recognise him in his ordinary attire, and the charge was dropped. Soon afterwards he confessed his stratagem to the Governor, who apparently, however, took no further steps in the matter. Hind then made his way to Scotland and joined



the Royalist army which was preparing to invade England. According to one account he was presented to Charles II. at Stirling, and would have been given a place in the King's bodyguard had it not been already full. But by the Royal command he was enrolled in the Duke of Buckingham's troop. After the defeat at Worcester he escaped to London, where he lay in hiding for five weeks. But on November 9, 1651, he was arrested and taken to the Speaker's house, where he was closely questioned as to the whereabouts of "Charles Stuart." Nothing, however, could be extracted from him, and on March 1, 1652, he was tried at Reading for the murder of a groom whom he had shot at Knowle Hill, mistaking him for a pursuer. He was duly convicted and sentenced to death, but on the following day the Act of Oblivion came into operation which granted an indemnity for past offences. Under this his death sentence was discharged; but he was not destined to escape. For the Act did not cover high treason, and he was shortly afterwards taken to Worcester and tried for this offence. Conviction was now inevitable, and he was hanged, drawn, and quartered there on September 24, 1652. Taking his history as we find it, he was certainly one of the most interesting of the early highwaymen. He was described as "a polite and considerate robber," especially to ladies, and was credited with the courtesy of always taking off his hat to his victims. His social successes confirm the tradition that his manners were agreeable, and in spite of the grotesque "protracture" which is prefixed to Smeeton's *Memoirs*,\* his personal appearance may also have been attractive. He has really a better claim to be regarded as the model highwayman than Du Vall. Fully equal to the latter in courtesy, he was decidedly superior to him in the virile qualities which distinguish the soldier from the mere ruffler and lend a certain dignity even to the thief. The following stanzas form part of a poem on him published after his death:—

\* *The Merry Life and Exploits of Captain James Hind: the great Rober of England.* Smeeton: *Historical Tracts*, vol. ii.

Hind made our wealth a common store,  
 He robb'd the rich to feed the poor.  
 What did immortal Cæsar more ?

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

Yet when his country's cause invites,  
 See him assert a nation's rights !  
 A robber for a Monarch fights !

Nevison, or Nevinson, born in 1639, a man of commanding presence, courtly manners, and undaunted courage, carried on the tradition of the robber knight-errant. He dealt gently with the poor, and is described as being "very favourable to the female sex, who generally gave him the character of a civil obliging robber." Moreover, "being a true Royalist, he never attempted anything against that party." \*

If he was forced to rob, or, as he termed it, to borrow from the poor, he would repay the debt with what he took from the rich. A bailiff who had been selling up a small farmer was unlucky enough to meet Nevinson with the proceeds of the sale upon him. Nevinson promptly relieved him of the money and restored it forthwith to the farmer. On another occasion, finding two countrymen bewailing the loss of £40 of which they had been plundered by three highwaymen, Nevinson at once gave chase, fought and overcame the robbers, and forced them to disgorge the £40, which he returned to the delighted owners. A wonderful story is told of an ingenious escape which he made from Leicester Gaol. Feigning a pestilential fever, he was removed, with the aid of a confederate physician, from his cell to a less carefully guarded apartment. The gaoler and his attendants were inclined to give him a wide berth, and this assisted him to elaborate his plans. He got his body painted with blue spots to imitate the plague, and the friendly physician then gave him "a dose whereby his spirits were confin'd for the space of an hour or two," and declared him to be dead. The inquest under these circumstances was not very searching, and Nevinson was hurriedly

\* He shares with Swift Nicks the credit of the ride to York falsely ascribed to Dick Turpin. Mr. Harper regards Nevison and Swift Nicks as identical ; but I follow Smith in treating them as distinct persons.

packed into a coffin and taken out for burial. In due course of time he recovered consciousness, emerged from his coffin, and reappeared on the roads.

Indeed, though all these legends must be liberally discounted, there does run through the early annals of the highway a thin strain of sentiment and magnanimity. And though its manifestations were irregular and capricious, it had the effect of raising the profession in popular estimation. The highwayman tenaciously claimed to be regarded as a gentleman, and, preposterous as the claim now sounds, it was more easily tolerated in the seventeenth century. It is evident, moreover, that among the lower classes taking to the road was often regarded as a rise in the social scale. Inspired by this feeling, John Ovet, a shoemaker, born in 1676, decided "to translate himself into a gentleman by maintaining that position on the highway." To do him justice, he played the game—up to a point. A traveller whom he had robbed complained bitterly that if he had not been taken by surprise he would have fought for his money. Ovet took up the challenge at once. "Here is your money again," he replied; "let it be betwixt us, and whoever of us is the best man shall win and wear it." In the fight which followed Ovet killed his antagonist. He does not show up so well, however, in another adventure. Being charmed with the beauty of a lady whom he had robbed, he promised to repay her if she would give him her address. Having obtained this, he wrote soon afterwards, not returning the money, but making a high-flown offer of marriage. The lady's reply was severely discouraging and ended thus:—

"You have already broken your word, in not sending me what you villainously took from me; but, not valuing that, let me tell you, for fear you should have too great a conceit of yourself, that you are the first to my recollection that I ever hated; and sealing my hatred with the hopes of quickly reading your dying speech, in case you die in London, I presume to subscribe myself

"Yours, never to command,

"—."

The significance of the story lies, however, not in the fact that his offer was rejected, but in the fact that it was made. Ovet the cobbler would never have ventured upon such a proposal; Ovet the highwayman felt that, from his higher social position, he was justified in aspiring to the hand of a lady. Nor were such hopes unfounded, for the ladies of the period were quite inclined to be silly about highwaymen—as witness Du Vall, Darking, and Maclaine—and at least one of the craft, Thomas Cox, had married a rich wife from the dock. A still higher note was struck by a Welsh highwayman, Evan Evans. He was the son of an innkeeper at Brecon. He harried the Welsh border till it grew too hot for him, and was driven to seek the seclusion of the London crowd. Here his handsome appearance and deportment won the favour of Sir Edmund Andrews, Governor of Guernsey, who made him his secretary. But this life was too tame for him, and in three or four years he returned to the road. In company with his brother and two other men he attacked the carriage of a member of Parliament. Contrary to all custom, the travelling party offered a stout resistance. A protracted fight ensued, in which the horse of Evans's brother was shot. Then by consent and to save bloodshed it was agreed that the issue should be decided by single combat between Evans and the member. Evans soon disarmed his opponent, but courteously returned his sword to him, "accepting only of a good horse to carry his brother off, and what money they pleased to collect among 'em; for which genteel piece of behaviour that honourable person afterwards endeavoured to save his life." Later on the two brothers encountered a press-gang conducting their captives to the coast. They attacked the escort so fiercely that it took to flight, leaving behind the prisoners, whom the highwaymen immediately released. One can almost wish that some lighter doom than the gibbet had befallen this pair, but it was not to be. They were betrayed by a Scotchman, to whom they had good-naturedly restored the money which they had taken from him, and were hanged at Hertford in 1708.

Evidently the line between the gentlemen who were on

the road in the seventeenth century and the gentlemen who for the time being were off it was generously vague and the transition singularly easy. Clavell, Wilmot, Dudley, Clarke, Parsons, Atkinson, Congden, Thornton, and perhaps Cox, were all highwaymen of gentle birth, and Atkinson, Congden, and Thornton were University men. Many, such as Barkwith, Langley, and Page, were men of considerable ability, or, like Hind and Evans, were sufficiently presentable in manners and appearance to fill respectable posts. The career of one Nicks is a good example of the fluctuating changes of this life on the border-line. He is one of the very few highwaymen whose story has a happy ending. There is, as we have seen (p. 280, note), some doubt as to his identity, but, whoever he was, he seems to have performed the famous ride to York. Leaving London in the small hours one morning, he robbed a gentleman of five hundred and sixty guineas near Barnet. He then "rid straight for York and appeared there on the Bowling Green about six in the evening of the same day." This feat enabled him to prove an alibi, but subsequently, when the affair had blown over, he admitted the robbery. Charles II., in royal recognition of his greatness, pleasantly dubbed him "Swift Nicks." According to Smith, we next hear of him as holding a captain's commission in Lord Moncastle's regiment in Ireland, and, luck still favouring him, he there "married a great fortune, and afterwards lived very honest."

Turpin owes most of his fame to fiction, and was in reality a commonplace ruffian of a brutal type. He was born at Epping in 1711. His early youth was spent in sheep-stealing, smuggling, and deer-stealing. From his companions in deer-stealing he formed a gang of burglars, who committed the most atrocious outrages, till the gang was broken up early in 1735. Turpin escaped to Cambridge, and on his way there attempted to rob another highwayman named King. This encounter had a quaintly practical ending. "What! dog eat dog!" exclaimed King pleasantly; and a partnership was forthwith formed between them, which lasted till Turpin's unlucky bullet struck down the

comrade whom it was intended to save. For three years or thereabouts they robbed together with great audacity and success, and became so notorious that no house would receive them. Yet even over this precious pair the tradition of the road had cast its spell. For we find them returning to a Mr. Bradele a mourning ring which he prized, explaining that "they were more of gentlemen than to take anything a gentleman valued so much." Being denied the harbourage of a house, they made a sort of lair for themselves in a thicket between the King's Oak Road and the Loughton Road in Essex. In this retreat, which was large enough to accommodate their horses, they were supplied with food by Turpin's wife, and they could watch the road by means of spyholes in the bushes. After King's death, however, the lair was discovered, and Turpin fled to Yorkshire. Here, under the name of Palmer, he lived at his ease, and "often took his diversion with the gentlemen of the county in hunting and shooting." But the innate brutality of the man betrayed him to his doom. Returning from shooting one October evening in 1738 he wantonly killed one of his landlord's fowls. Being rebuked for this by a neighbour named Hall, Turpin retorted that as soon as he had reloaded he would shoot Hall too. For this threat he was arrested and committed to the House of Correction. But the result of the inquiries made about him roused such grave suspicions that he was removed in irons to York Castle. Four months later his identity was discovered, and he was ultimately hanged on April 7, 1739.

And in truth, against such intermittent courtesies as may be ascribed to the highwaymen there is a heavy balance of brutality to be reckoned. Even the best of them stooped to this at times, and the worst were habitually guilty of it. Men, and sometimes women, were stripped naked, savagely beaten, and otherwise maltreated; and almost without exception they indulged in foully abusive language. On this point Smith's history is suspiciously circumstantial. It records elaborate dialogues between the robber and the robbed which obviously are no more authentic than the

speeches in Thucydides. But though his details cannot be trusted, his broad outlines are probably accurate enough, and he has evidently preserved the traditions. Accordingly, since the language of his highwaymen almost always reeks with abuse, we may fairly presume that this was the professional custom. "The Golden Farmer," a merciless and desperate scoundrel named William Davis, was a great offender in this respect. Originally a native of Wrexham, he removed to Sudbury in Gloucestershire. Under cover of keeping a farm he successfully practised on the road for forty-two years. This was an extraordinarily long career for a highwayman, and he is said to have amassed a fortune; but fate overtook him at last, and he was hanged at Newgate on December 20, 1689, in his sixty-fourth year. Thomas Sympson, of Romsey, commonly known as "Old Mobb," sometimes accompanied the Golden Farmer, and was a ruffian of the same kidney. So too was John Cottington, better known as Mulsack. Cottington was hanged in 1659, and Sympson in 1690. James Whitney's tongue was so rough that even his comrades rebuked him. "Why can't you rob a gentleman civilly?" said one of them. "But you must curse and call names like I know not what." On one occasion a traveller from whom he had taken £100 in silver begged for the return of some of it to carry him on his journey. Whitney held out the bag to him saying, "Here, take what you have occasion for," upon which the man grabbed as large a handful as he could clutch. Whitney laughed grimly and observed, "I thought you would have had more conscience." Indeed, in his way he was a humourist and liked playing tricks upon his victims. A usurer whom he had robbed exclaimed bitterly that he hoped to see Whitney riding backwards up Holborn Hill. Whitney replied that he should like to see what riding backwards looked like, and binding the usurer backwards on his horse, sent it galloping into Hounslow. Having robbed a clergyman once of £10, he insisted further on his preaching a sermon, which one of the gang is said to have taken down in shorthand. The clergyman entered readily into the spirit of the situation. Taking as his Text

"THEFT," he divided his discourse into five heads—one for each letter of the word, namely: Theological, Historical, Exegetical, Figurative, Tropological. The sermon has some amusing touches. Thus, under the head of Figurative the preacher remarks, "Part of my text is to set forth that tho' I call you Gentlemen, yet in my heart I think ye to be all rogues; but only I modify my spleen by a Charientismus, which is a figure of speech mitigating hard matters with pleasant words." The rascals were so pleased with the sermon, that they decided that the parson was entitled to tithes, and accordingly presented him with ten shillings.

Making clergymen preach seems to have been rather a favourite pastime with highwaymen. Sir Gosselin Denvile and Captain Dudley are said to have indulged in it; and in the Lansdowne MSS. [98, Leaf 210] there is preserved "A sermon made by Parson Haben upon a Mold hill at Hartley Row at the comaundement of seven theves, whoe after they had robbed him comaunded him to Preache before them." The preacher took a bold line, and his sermon, but for its quaintness, would be highly irreverent. "I marvell," he commenced, "that everye man will seme to dispraise theverye, and thinke the doers thereof worthye of Death, when it is a thing that cometh nere vnto vertue and is used of all men, of all sortes, and in all cuntryes, and soe commaunded of god himselfe." The argument of the discourse is, as might be expected, somewhat thin, but its conclusion is startling: "I marvell therefore that men can despise your lives, when that you are in all poynts almost like vnto Christe; for Christe hade no dwellinge place—noe more have you. Christe, therefore, at the laste, was laid waite for in all places—and soe are you. Christe, alsoe, at the laste, was called for,—and soe shall you be. Christe was hanged,—soe shall you. He descended into hell,—so shall you. But in one pointe you differ. He assendid into heaven—so shall you never, without God's mercye, which God graunte for his mercye's sake." So much edified were the thieves by this discourse that they gave the parson his money back again, and seven shillings more for the



sermon. This incident apparently belongs to the sixteenth century.

Several causes may have contributed to the violence of the highwayman's language. Partly, perhaps, it served to keep up his own courage; partly it may have helped to intimidate his victims; and partly it sprang, no doubt, from a desire to be in the fashion. For the language of the fine gentlemen of the day was remarkably full-bodied, and a self-respecting beau took a pride in his expletives. There is a story of one Wicks compelling the notorious Lord Mohun to stand and deliver. Lord Mohun yielded up his money, but broke into a passionate fit of swearing. Wicks listened to this with the appreciation of a professional, and then remarked, "My lord, I perceive you swear perfectly well *extempore*. Come, I'll give your honour a fair chance for your money, and that is, he that swears best of us two shall keep his own and his that loseth." The match was fixed for fifty guineas a side, and the strange rivals commenced to contend for this stranger crown. "After a quarter of an hour's swearing, most prodigiously on both sides, it was left to my Lord's groom to decide the matter, who said, 'Why, indeed your honour swears as well as I ever heard a person of quality in my life; but indeed, to give the strange gentleman his due, he has won the wager, if 'twas for a thousand pounds.'" The same desire to be fashionable gave the brotherhood a strong taste for magnificent attire. It is quite common to find that a highwayman's first illicit gains were spent upon dress. Du Vall, Butler, Hawkins, Page, Darking, and Maclaine, were dandies of the first water, and in John Rann—known as sixteen-string-Jack from the ribbons which floated at his knees—we see the same taste degenerating into vulgarity. He belongs, however, to a later period, and before leaving the seventeenth century we must take a glance at two of its highway heroines.

Mary Frith, commonly known as Moll Cutpurse—born in 1584 or 1585—was to all intents and purposes a man, and with fist, cudgel, or rapier was an ordinary man's equal. She scorned both feminine pursuits and feminine attire, and

haunted the theatre, the tavern, and the Beargarden, in a nondescript male costume. From pocket-picking and fortune-telling she took to the road, but being a good Royalist, confined her attentions to Roundheads. She is said to have robbed Fairfax on Hounslow Heath, but was pursued, captured, and thrown into Newgate. Here she might have fared badly, had she not "procur'd her pardon by giving her adversary £2,000!" The tale is almost incredible, though acquittals were frequently obtained on similar terms. But in any case she abandoned the road for the safer vocation of a receiver. Anticipating Jonathan Wild, she started a sort of "brokery," where stolen property could be recovered, for a consideration, and conducted this business with great skill and success. She was sentenced by the Court of Arches to do penance in a white sheet at St. Paul's Cross for wearing indecent and manly apparel, but she cared little for her penance and refused to mend her ways. Middleton, in his play *The Roaring Girl*, gives a picture of her which is admittedly glorified: "Worse things, I must needs confess, the world has taxed her for than has been written of her; but 'tis the excellency of a playwright to leave things better than he finds 'em" (Preface). In the play she is represented as honest, and, as things went then, pure. She poses as the champion of her sex against the base artifices of man; and in defiant scorn of these she refuses to enter the bonds of matrimony. All available evidence, however, is opposed to this romance. Ugly, brutal, and unsexed, she had no feminine charms to redeem her masculine vices, and, beyond a certain rough loyalty to her comrades in crime, there is hardly a saving merit which can be placed to her account. She died about 1659, having nearly frittered away a—reputed—fortune of £5,000.

Joan Bracey is a very different figure. She was the daughter of a wealthy farmer in Northamptonshire, but gave her heart to a highwayman, Edward Bracey, and eloped with him to share his life. Her story brings back an echo of *The Nutbrown Maid*, and indeed her love and loyalty deserved a better sphere. Bright, clever, and



MOLL CUT-PURSE.



resourceful, she threw herself heart and soul into her lover's projects, devising many a clever scheme for plundering individuals or cheating the law. Only on the highway did she adopt the male garb, and it was on the highway that her fate overtook her. She was captured in an unsuccessful attempt to rob a carriage, and was hanged at Nottingham in 1685.

As we emerge from the seventeenth into the eighteenth century there is a change of the *mise en scène*. We miss the picturesque lights and shades of the earlier period, which endue the hazy figures moving through them with faint heroic tints. But what we lose in romantic charm we gain in prosaic distinctness; and we exchange what was largely myth for something more nearly history. For the eighteenth-century highwayman was a solid reality to be encountered literally at every turn. Walpole writes in 1750 that robbery was going on with the greatest vivacity, and it continued to increase in vigour to the end of the century. Landmann tells us that in 1791 highway robberies were committed almost with impunity on all the roads leading out of London (*Adventures and Recollections*, i. 53). On some of these patrols of armed horsemen were established to protect the stage-coaches, but without much effect. In 1782 Highgate was so harried by these marauders that the resident gentry organised a similar body of guards (*History of Highgate*, 199, 412). In 1746 the proprietors of Marylebone Gardens, which occupied part of the present Regent's Park, provided a guard of soldiers to protect visitors from London; and in 1754 a strong guard patrolled the road to Ranelagh (Andrews, *The Eighteenth Century*, 54-5). At Kensington and Islington, as evening fell, a bell was rung at intervals to muster those who were returning to London, so that they might start in bodies sufficiently large to be safe. Even in London itself the ill-paved, ill-lighted streets were full of peril for the wayfarer. Piccadilly was not safe after dark. George IV., when Prince of Wales, and his brother, the Duke of York, were robbed one night in a hackney carriage on Hay Hill, Berkeley Square; and the iron bar which still divides the

entrance to Lansdown Passage keeps alive the exploit of the highwayman who, after a robbery in Piccadilly, galloped down the Passage and escaped. Nay, more: in January, 1784, the French mail was overhauled by highwaymen at half-past eight in the evening in Pall Mall—"the great thoroughfare of London," as Walpole calls it—actually within hail of the guard at St. James's Palace.

While this was the state of things in London, Walpole's letters give a lively account of the dangers of the country highways. He writes to Mann on October 6, 1774, from Strawberry Hill: "Our roads are so infested by highwaymen that it is dangerous stirring out almost by day. Lady Hertford was attacked on Hounslow Heath at three in the afternoon. Dr. Eliot was shot at three days ago without having resisted; and the day before we were near losing our Prime Minister, Lord North; the robbers shot at the postilion and wounded the latter."

Eight years later he writes to Lord Harcourt: "I live as if I were just arrived from Syria and were performing quarantine. Nobody dares stir out of their own house. We are robbed and murdered if we do but step over the threshold to the chandler's shop for a pennyworth of plums." Walpole himself was robbed three times at least, and once nearly lost his life at the hands of the notorious Maclaine by the highwayman's pistol going off accidentally. Existence under such conditions seems almost intolerable, yet the good folk of the eighteenth century appear to have accepted it with strange complacency. One evening in the autumn of 1781 Walpole was going with Lady Browne to the Duchess of Montrose at Twickenham Park. A highwayman stopped the carriage, and Walpole had just time to slip his watch under his waistcoat before handing over his purse. Lady Browne surrendered hers also, and the robber took off his hat and disappeared. Walpole lost nine guineas, but the lady had wisely provided herself with a purse of bad money for the benefit of the local highwaymen. The law was quite unable to cope with this growing evil. Henry Fielding, who was a justice of Westminster, testifies to the difficulty of arresting these malefactors.

"How long have we known highwaymen reign in this kingdom after they have been publickly known for such? Have not some of these committed robberies in open daylight, in the sight of many people, and have afterward rode solemnly and triumphantly through the neighbouring towns without danger or molestation? This happens to every rogue who is become eminent for his audaciousness, and is thought to be desperate; and is, in a more particular manner, the case of great and numerous gangs, many of which have for a long time committed the most open outrages in defiance of the law. Officers of justice have owned to me that they have passed by such with warrants in their pockets against them without daring to apprehend them; and indeed they could not be blamed for not exposing themselves to sure destruction" (an essay on *The Increase of Robbers*, Works, x. 423). Sometimes, however, if the pursuit became too hot, a highwayman would contrive to get himself thrown into the debtors' prison, where no search was made, and there lie *perdu* till happier days arrived. This sense of immunity quickened the audacity of the highwaymen, and may have helped to swell their ranks. Again, the roads were still inconceivably bad, a fact which gave the horseman a great advantage over the carriage.

Gambling losses were undoubtedly responsible for many conversions to the highway. During the reigns of the first two Georges the gambling mania had saturated society from White's to the gutter. The tradesman, ruined by trying to ape the excesses of the aristocracy, would take to the road in a desperate attempt to restore his credit. The *Annual Register* tells of one such who, on being recognised by the traveller whom he had stopped, instantly blew out his own brains (*Annual Register*, 1775, p. 82). Gamblers on the turf would frequently attempt to recover their losses by robbery on the road from Newmarket. Pulteney, writing in the *World* (April 26, 1753), tells the same tale of the smaller meetings. Walpole declared his belief that the highwayman who robbed Lady Browne and himself was a gentleman, and more than once intimates

that such things might be. Colonel George Hanger visited the highwayman William Hawke in prison, and offered him a high price for his mare. Hawke thanked him heartily, but added confidentially, "She won't suit you perhaps if you want her for the road. It is not every man that can get her up to a carriage." Another great cause of the increase of highway robbery is pointedly indicated by Walpole. If the highwayman of the seventeenth century were recruited from broken cavaliers, the marauding army of the eighteenth century was swollen by disbanded soldiers—"highwaymen who have been heroes," as he calls them. Since 1718 England had transported her convicts to the Plantations; but this practice, of course, stopped with the War of Independence, and they were confined on lighters for the term of their sentences. The result was that they emerged greater experts in iniquity than before, and having no means of employment, were thrown upon the road. "Who would have thought," Walpole writes to Lady Ossory (August 31, 1782), "that the war with America would make it impossible to stir from one village to another? Yet so it literally is. The Colonies took off all our commodities down to highwaymen. Now, being forced to mew and then turn them out like pheasants, the roads are stocked with them, and they are so tame that they even come into houses." This influx of baser elements produced its natural result. The trappings of romance, slender enough at the best, with which the old highwayman had contrived to bedeck himself could not cling to the figure of a cut-throat thief; and the highwayman began to sink rapidly to the level of the footpad. Yet the old idea died hard, and some at least of the later generation aimed at the ideal of the gentleman robber. Among these we have Thomas Barkwith, cultivated and intellectual, ruined by his passion for a girl who only fooled with his affection. Or again, William Page, "a highwayman of extraordinary parts and escapes," as Walpole describes him; whose miraculous deliveries from drowning only preserved him for the gallows. A clever scholar and an arrant coxcomb. In turns a haberdasher, a livery servant, a law student,



and a thief. He was the son of a farmer at Hampton, but showed such an exceptional ability in his youth that he was sent to London to be educated. He began life as a haberdasher's apprentice, but aspired to move in higher society, and was inordinately fond of finery. He soon fell into dishonest courses, and after various vicissitudes took to the highway. He made a private map of the roads about London, and avoided detection by driving out in a smart phaeton and pair. Arrived at some quiet spot, he would change his clothes, mount one of the horses, ride out to the main road to ply his trade, and then, changing his dress once more, drive back with his booty to London. On one occasion he stopped and robbed the "frantic Earl Ferrers," as Walpole calls him, a criminal lunatic who, after attempting to kill his wife, was ultimately executed for the savage murder of his steward. He used to carry a small arsenal of pistols about with him; but Page quietly disarmed and robbed him, and when tried for the offence obtained an acquittal by pleading that Lord Ferrers, being excommunicated, could not give evidence. Truly a highwayman of parts! In spite of his haughty disposition, his professional style was temperate, and in his prolonged encounter with Captain Jasper he showed a sweet reasonableness most unusual in a highwayman. Jasper had offered a stout resistance, and had twice tried ineffectually to shoot Page. The latter then delivered his ultimatum: "You must now surrender, or I absolutely will shoot you." Jasper refuse to surrender his sword. Page, admiring his spirit, exclaimed, "Thou art the bravest fellow that ever crossed these plains, but thou art an obstinate fellow; and so go about your business." Page was hanged on April 6, 1758.

To Isaac Darking, or Dumas, a "short, bright, resistless course was given." The son of a cork-cutter in East Cheap, he had the tastes of a duke. Handsome, extravagant, and fond of all social pleasures, he took to the road to provide for his mistress. He was sentenced to death in 1758 for highway robbery, but was pardoned on the ground of his youth. He served as a soldier in Antigua, and as a midship-

man on board the *Royal George*. In 1760 he was tried for the robbery of Lord Percival, but was acquitted. While awaiting trial in Salisbury Gaol he was "visited by many ladies, on whom he made such a sensible impression by his obliging behaviour and genteel address as to become the tea-table chat of the whole town." Here is the first stanza of some verses written on his acquittal :—

Joy to thee, lovely thief ! that thou  
Hast 'scaped the fatal string ;  
Let gallows groan with ugly rogues,  
Dumas must never swing.

Unlike the blustering bravoës of the preceding century, he never stooped to foul language or abuse, and his speech, which abhorred such crudities as " robbery " or " highwayman," was full of delicate euphemisms for the ugly realities of his trade. To some extent, of course, this was affectation, but it was rooted in a genuine fastidiousness of taste, which showed itself also in the scrupulous elegance of his dress and the care with which he kept even his fetters polished and adorned with ribbons. His respite, however, was very brief. Six weeks after his acquittal at Salisbury he was arrested for the robbery of a Mr. Gammon near Oxford, and being found guilty was hanged at Oxford on March 23, 1761—being still under twenty-one. The *Annual Register* remarks of him, rather sententiously, that his character was " a medley of virtues and vices " ; that his courage was restrained by a high notion of honour, that he abhorred cruelty, and was " firmly attached to his doxies."

It is curious to notice that society was inclined to accept the highwayman at his own valuation. He found an easy admittance to the gaming-tables, the masquerades, and public festivities generally. So notorious was this, that Sir John Fielding, the Bow Street magistrate, once swooped down upon a masquerade in search of highwaymen. Jack Rann was a vulgar braggart, but he appeared openly at Bagnigge Wells and Barnet Races ; and it was at a masquerade that he first met his faithful partner, Ellen Roche. He was commonly known as " Sixteen-string Jack," from

the bunches of coloured ribbons with which he adorned the knees of his breeches. He was very fond of extravagant finery, and at his last trial he appeared in court in a pea-green coat and waistcoat, buckskin breeches, and a silver-laced hat. Even some fashionable doors were open to the robber. Page at one period of his career frequented the assemblies of Sunninghill, Richmond, Hampstead, and elsewhere, "and ladies began to look upon him with distinction." Hayward, the burglar, "was to be seen at Almack's,\* joining in the voluptuous waltz with some honourable miss of the West End, or sporting a toe in a quadrille with a woman of the town at places of inferior note." And Maclaine was a welcome visitor at the house of Lady Caroline Petersham, who appeared on his trial to testify to his character.

James Maclaine was almost the last of the famous highwaymen, but his reputation altogether exceeds his deserts. He was the second son—born 1724—of a Scotch Presbyterian minister who had settled in Ireland. On his father's death he squandered his small portion, and went into service as a butler. Having been dismissed for dishonesty, he contemplated enlisting—first in one of the Irish regiments in the French service, and subsequently in Lord Albemarle's troop. Conscience kept him out of the first, and cowardice out of the second. His religious scruples would not permit him to become a Roman Catholic, and his martial aspirations were not ardent enough to face the prospect of active service in Flanders. After all, it was safer behind a counter, so he married a Miss Maclegno, with a portion of £500, and went into business as a grocer. Three years later his wife died; whereupon he sold his business, handed over his two children to the care of his wife's parents, and started as an adventurer in company with one Plunkett, a stronger scoundrel than himself. Ultimately the pair took to the road, though Maclaine was not really the man for such work, being a sorry cur at heart. He displayed, as the *Newgate Calendar* expresses it, "evident signs of want of that false bravery which villains would call courage," and

\* *i.e.*, Almack's Assembly Rooms, which were founded by Macall in 1765, a year later than Almack's Club.

Plunkett used to rate him soundly for his cowardice. The first robbery of the partners was on Hounslow Heath, where they took £60 from a grazier. When this was spent they went back to the highway, and stopped a stage-coach on the St. Albans road. Plunkett ordered the driver to pull up, but Maclaine was in a pitiable state of fear, and it was only with the utmost trepidation that he demanded the money of the passengers. Stung by Plunkett's bitter reproaches, he plucked up heart enough to go out by himself, and succeeded in stripping a traveller of a large sum of money. This encouraged him, and he began to rob more boldly, one of his victims, as we have seen, being Horace Walpole. Once, indeed, he was nearly caught, and fled in terror to The Hague, where his elder brother Archibald was pastor to the English community. But the danger blew over, and he returned to England to resume his career. The partnership prospered and the partners grew rich. Plunkett took fashionable rooms in Jermyn Street, Maclaine in St. James's Street, the latter apparently getting to some extent into society. Walpole writes of them : " Their faces were as well known about St. James's Street as any gentleman who lives in that quarter, and who perhaps goes upon the road too." Maclaine now began to ruffle it bravely as a gentleman, not, however, without some social reverses. He was on the point of contracting another marriage—according to the *Newgate Calendar* to a lady of fortune—but the girl received a timely warning that he was an adventurer. Again, a challenge which he sent to an officer was contemptuously refused, and though Maclaine blustered a good deal, he found public feeling against him. In the summer of 1750 he was arrested on a charge of robbing the Salisbury stage-coach, and ultimately found guilty and hanged. When apprehended he broke down completely. " He is so little of a hero," says Walpole, " that he cries and begs." Nevertheless he became the craze of the hour. " Lord Mountford at the head of half White's " went to visit him directly after his arrest, and on the following Sunday three thousand people went to see him. So great was the crush that he fainted twice with the heat of his cell. But the chief

personages who went to comfort the fallen hero were Lady Caroline Petersham—no mean scapegrace herself—and Miss Ashe, afterwards Mrs. Falconer. Walpole laughed at them mercilessly, comparing them to Polly and Lucy in the *Beggar's Opera*.

Maclaine was executed in 1750, Page in 1758, Rann in 1774; and with them the old-fashioned highwayman disappeared. There were others, but they belonged to a new order, from which the old-world glamour had faded away. At this point, therefore, we may conveniently review the strangely chequered story of the Gentlemen of the Road. Highway robbery, so far as it represented the rudimentary desire to get rich at the expense of other people, was, of course, crudely commonplace. But, in its early days at any rate, it was something more than a mere gratification of covetousness. Deep down there lay, under all its grosser features, a definite ethical element in the craft of the highway. The wrongs of an oppressed people, the violated rights of a discrowned king, or even some smarting sense of personal injustice from society, stirred fitfully in the hearts of the better sort of highwaymen, and served to keep alive in them a certain sense of self-respect. The public seems to have vaguely appreciated this distinction, and to have felt a sneaking sympathy with the highwayman as a person with a grievance. Otherwise it is difficult to understand the forbearance with which travellers treated his exactions, or the gratitude with which they welcomed his occasional civilities. This forbearance can hardly have sprung from cowardice, because it disappeared when the character of the highwayman altered. Private individuals rarely took proceedings against him, and would sometimes (as in Ovet's case) exert themselves actively on his behalf. And while the higher ranks of society half tolerated the highwayman, the lower classes openly admired him as something of a hero. Under these sympathetic conditions it is not surprising that he began to flourish. Nor did the profession lack some solid allurements. There were rich prizes to be won; and in the days when the roads to wealth were comparatively few, the temptation to grasp it at one bound might well be irresistible to a noble

discontent. Added to all this was the notoriety which blazed upon the highwayman's career, and which seems to have had an extraordinary fascination for many of them. Society flocked to see him in prison; his life and adventures were rapidly published and easily read; his fame flitted lightly through the mouths of men, and his memory was preserved in song. Even the last journey to Tyburn was like a triumphal procession, "attended," as Henry Fielding remarks, "with the compassion of the meek and tender-hearted, and with the applause, admiration and envy of all the bold and hardened" (*Increase of Robbers*, 449). There was a grim affectation of gala about the whole thing. The highwayman, dressed in his smartest clothes, set out from Newgate, stopping at St. Sepulchre's Church to receive a bouquet from the clergyman, and at the "Bowl," which stood where Endell Street now joins Broad Street, for a final drink. Up to his last hour he jealously guarded his social status; for even the road to death had its rights of precedence, and, ghastly as it sounds, there was eager competition for the place of honour in the funeral cart. Originally a highwayman was held to be entitled to this, but subsequently it was assigned to mail-robbers; and at times the journey to the gallows was occupied by bitter wrangles between rival malefactors for this distinction. The Tyburn gallows originally stood at the point where Oxford Street meets the Edgware Road; but later on it was taken down and a temporary gallows was erected when required at various spots near what is now Connaught Square. The Tyburn procession was abolished in 1783, not without a vigorous protest from Dr. Johnson, who objected that unless executions attracted spectators they failed in their purpose. "The old method," he insisted, "was satisfactory to all parties: the public was gratified by a procession; the criminal was supported by it." Truly a quaint argument! The highwayman's regard for his personal appearance during life extended also to his body after death. Execution he faced with bravery or bravado, as the case might be, but he shrank in horror from the idea of his corpse being exposed. So strong was this

sentiment that the Government was able to utilise it for penal purposes, and mail robberies were appreciably checked by an order issued in 1753 that the bodies of mail-robbers should be hung in chains.

But as the eighteenth century progressed the old order began to change. The later highwaymen had none of the redeeming traits of their predecessors. Such courtsey as they showed was theatrical rather than real, and was reduced to burlesque in the "visiting highwayman" of Walpole's story, who never robbed people without previously calling on them.\* And as the grace faded out of the highway robber society became less tolerant of his depredations. Travellers began to shoot at sight, and, as the *Annual Register* shows, a good many highwaymen were disposed of in this way. The Earl of Berkeley was credited with quite a large bag, but he enjoyed exceptional opportunities. Having once been taken by surprise and robbed, he vowed that he would never be robbed again; and he kept his word. This resolution, however, put the highway fraternity on their mettle, and they devoted special attention to him. There is a sporting flavour about this competition which seems to have caught the fancy of the public. The *Annual Register*, under date November 11, 1774, tells us of the arrest of seven youths, "some of whose parents are in easy, some in affluent circumstances," in connection with an attempt to rob the Earl. But he had some narrow escapes. One evening, when driving across Hounslow Heath, he was wakened from sleep by a highwayman, who exclaimed, "I have you now, my lord, after all your boasts that you would never let yourself be robbed." "Nor would I now," said Lord Berkeley, putting his hand in his pocket as if to draw out his purse, "but for that other fellow peeping over your shoulder." The highwayman turned hastily, and Lord Berkeley drawing out, not a purse, but a pistol, shot the marauder dead (Stanhope, *History of England*, viii. 313).

\* Walpole writes to Bentley on December 24, 1754, that this experience "happened almost literally to Mrs. Cavendish." His story appeared in *The World*, ii. 202.

The brigand or bandit finds his natural environment in unsettled countries, rude culture, and undeveloped government. In the fullest sense of the term he is an outlaw. But the highwayman proper belonged to civilisation, and was under its influence to the end. Banned though he was by the law, he was by no means an outcast from society, and he would certainly himself have claimed to belong to it. So far as lay in his power he conformed to its usages and conventions, adopted its ideals, entered into its politics, its business, its amusements, and its life generally. His claim to be a gentleman was not always unfounded, and sometimes, at any rate, he was the champion of the poor. His early sympathies were strongly Royalist, but he moved with the times in this respect, and later on we find him a supporter of the people's rights. On the evening of the Middlesex election in October, 1744, a Captain Stapleton returning to London from Richmond was stopped by two highwaymen. "Wilkes and Glynn for ever!" shouted the Captain, full of the election, and his partisanship proved most opportune. For the highwaymen "generously told him to drive on, declaring that they would never knowingly rob a friend to the public cause." Nor did he always scorn the help of the law which he flouted; for we find an ingenious couple, Everett and Williams, entering into a formal deed of partnership as highway robbers. Disputes having arisen as to the division of profits, Everett brought an action against his partner and actually obtained a verdict for £20. But subsequently the Court, awaking somewhat tardily to the true nature of the case, quashed the whole matter as scandalous, ordered Everett to pay the costs, and fined the lawyers on either side. In the amusements of society he participated, as we have seen, with singular freedom, though we may fancy that the *amari aliquid* must have surged up all too often from the heart of his fountain of delight. Sooner or later, and sometimes very soon, his doom overtook him. Many of the executed highwaymen were mere boys. The police administration was inefficient, but the thief-taker was abroad, and over the highwaymen of the early eighteenth century there brooded the fell shadow



of Jonathan Wild. This notorious scoundrel was born at Wolverhampton about 1682. He deserted his wife and came to London, where his extravagant habits soon brought him into prison for debt. Here he made the acquaintance of one Mary Milliner, and after their discharge they set up together as receivers of stolen goods. By this means Wild acquired an intimate knowledge of the habits and resorts of the thieves who dealt with him, and would betray them to the authorities when he had no further use for them. His operations were checked by an Act which imposed the penalty of transportation on receivers of stolen goods ; but he contrived to evade its provisions, and later on boldly opened a sort of inquiry office, where people who had been robbed might negotiate for the return of their property. His services in procuring the apprehension of criminals induced the authorities to wink at his nefarious practices ; but at last he was convicted of robbing a house of some lace, and was hanged on May 24, 1725. His ruling passion was strong in death, for on the way to Tyburn he picked the attendant clergyman's pocket of a corkscrew.

Looked at practically, the road was but a poor career. Though large prizes were possible, the ordinary takes were small ; and great or small they were all rapidly squandered. Yet there seems to have been a charm about the life which transcended its cash value, a fascination which bit deep and never loosed its hold. A turn of the wheel would sometimes raise the highwayman to a position of ease, affluence, and repute, and for a time all would go well. But in the end the call of the road was usually too strong for him, and he would leave all to follow it.

Soon after the end of the eighteenth century highway robbery began to die away. The increase of general prosperity enlarged the number of persons with property to lose, and who objected to losing it. The improved banking facilities which followed this increase made it unnecessary to take on a journey the large sums which were habitually carried by travellers in earlier times. The Bow Street Horse Patrole, a small but highly efficient force, was established by Sir Richard Ford in 1805. It was divided into

thirteen "parties," which scoured the roads within (roughly) a ten-mile radius of London and gradually swept them clear of evil-doers. Highway robbery survived somewhat longer in the country, but the various influences of advancing civilisation all combined to stifle it, till the railway brought about its final destruction. Its evil elements still abide with us, but they have been torn from their old setting, branded with dishonour, and curbed with a stern restraint. The wholesome energies which it perverted have found worthier fields of exercise, and it now lives only in the fading memory of those few redeeming graces which still lingers about its grave.

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